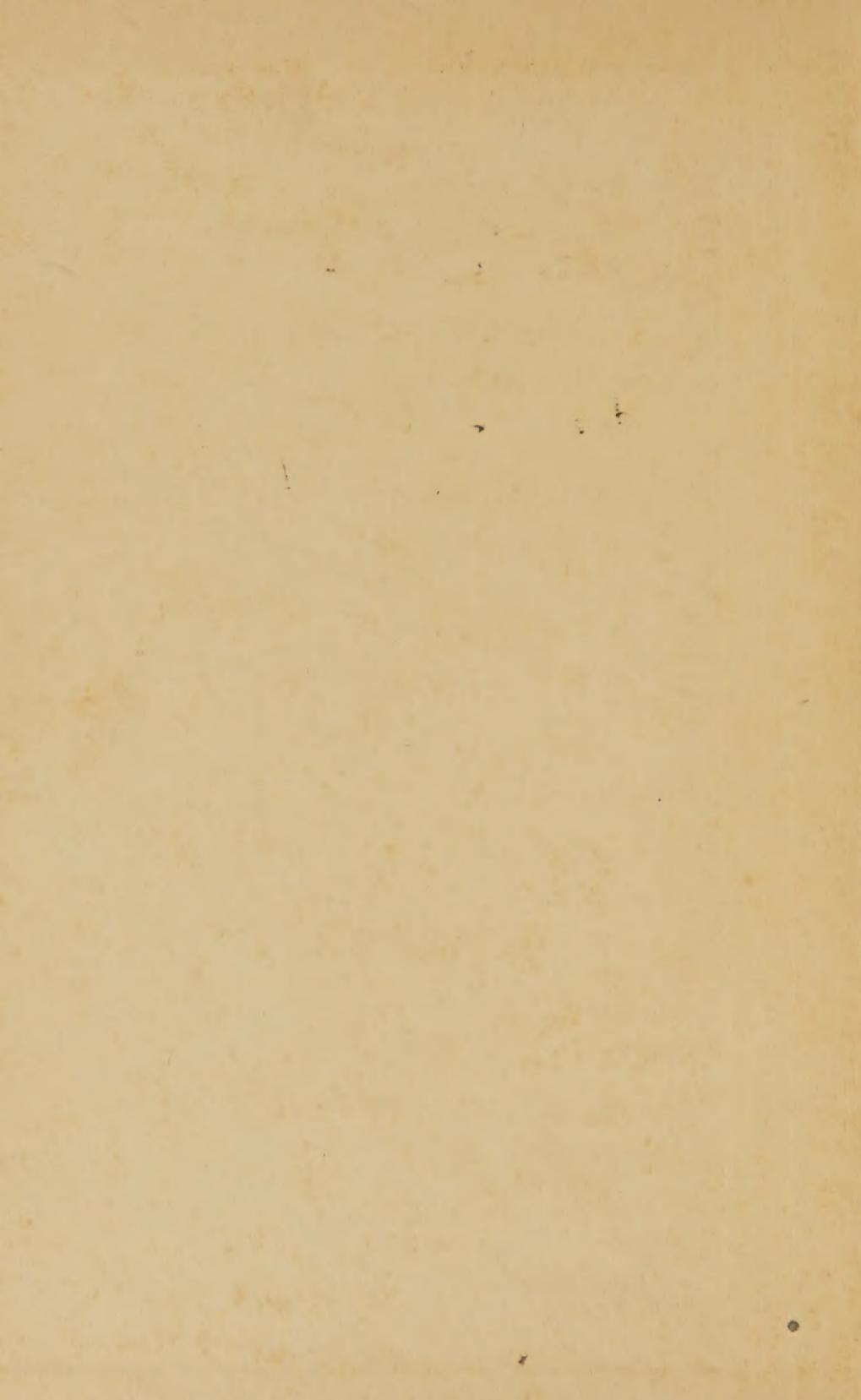


BALLYGULLION

By LYNN DOYLE

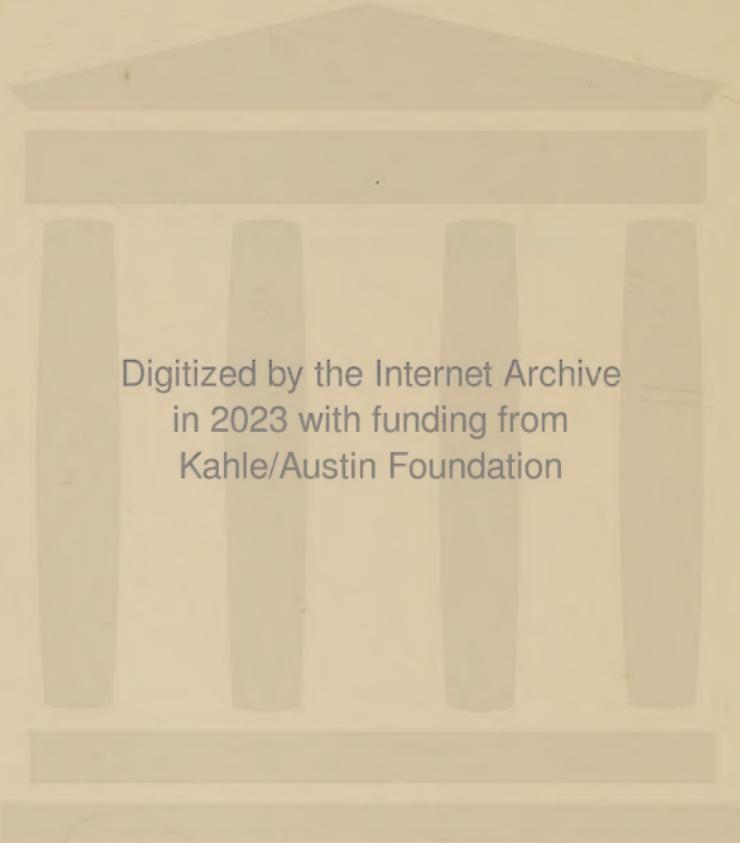


At long last.

I hope you will enjoy it.

✓ inc

BALLYGULLION



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BALLYGULLION

BY

LYNN DOYLE

AUTHOR OF

"MR. WILDRIFFE OF THE BANK," ETC.

DUBLIN

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TO MY WIFE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

My sporting associate and occasional client, Mr. Patrick Murphy, opened the door of my Belfast Office about twelve inches, insinuated himself through the aperture, and seating himself on the extreme edge of a chair, regarded me anxiously.

I had seldom seen him so serious. The humorous twinkle in his eye was quenched momentarily for the first time in our acquaintance.

"I suppose ye hadn't time since mornin' to look intil that," he said, nodding his head towards a pile of manuscript on my desk.

"I'm sorry to say I had, Pat," I answered.
"In fact, I read it all through."

"An' what might ye think av it?" he asked cautiously.

"I think we'll print it, Pat," said I. "But I want to know first if it's all your own."

"Ivery word av it, Misther Doyle," he said.

"Who wrote it all out for you then, Pat?" I said. "It's not in your hand surely?"

"Ye may swear that," he answered. "I wasn't that long at school. Wait an' I'll tell you the whole story :

"I was sthrolling along the road at me aise wan Sathurday afthernoon last October, when I heard the tootin' av a horn behind me.

"'Pat,' sez I to meself, 'Ye'd betther take to the ditch till that fellow gets by ; for the same ginthry is no ways particular who they run down, from a hen till a human bein'.'

"So I tuk in to the side av the road, an' 'twas well I did.

"Round the corner wi' a whizz comes a fellow on a mothor bicycle, shoots clear av me be about six inches, gives a couple av bad wobbles, an' round the nixt bend in a cloud av dust, lavin' a stink behind him fit to throw a thrain off the lines.

"Bad luck to ye, an' the whole breed av ye,' sez I, stampin' and spittin' ; 'for you're the curse av dacint counthry people that the roads was made for. A bad end to you an' your ould machine anyway.'

"'Twas only an idle word av mine, but ye niver seen an ill wish come sooner to roost. I wasn't more than a couple of hundhred yards furdher on till I come on him sittin' in the ditch.

"He got up very shaky lookin' as I come near him.

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' sez he, very polite, 'but would you mind givin' me a shove?—I got off,' sez he.

"I could see that. He had rowled over a couple av times on the road aftherwards, too ; but whin he said nothin' about that, neither did I.

"The bicycle was lyin' again the side av the ditch, stinkin' away as busy as it could ; but there was a kind av a publichouse whiff in the air, too, that I couldn't well blame on it. I took a hard look at the fellow an' give a sniff or two, an' it come into me mind that he was no teetotaler. Me heart softened till him a bit.

"'It's bad enough,' thinks I, 'to be overtaken in dhrink wi' a horse an' cart ; but whin it comes to a mothor bicycle it must be the very devil.'

"'Come on then,' sez I to the fellow. 'But if I'd ha' been you, I wouldn't ha' got off. I don't know how ye got on at the start, but ye should ha' kept at it. Up wi' ye, anyway.'

"So I gets the machine out av the ditch, grips the handle wi' me left hand, and gives him a powerful shove wi' the right.

"'Away ye go !' sez I.

"But I was wrong. To this day I don't know what wint asthray ; but whin I riz out

av the ditch me boy was lying undher the machine in the middle av the road.

“Up I gets, pulls the machine off him, an’ gets him on his feet. He was in a lamentable state wi’ dust an’ bits av sticks, an’ the sate av his breeches all soakin’ where the paraffin had seeped out av the tin tank.

“‘That was a bad start,’ sez he, lookin at me very sayrious.

“‘It was,’ sez I, ‘mortal bad. But it’ll make a brave finish if ye’ll let it. Just you sit down by the roadside an’ let the wind blow on ye a bit, an’ in half an hour’s time ye’ll be fit to ride her on a tight-rope.’

“‘I’m all right,’ sez he, straightenin’ himself up that far that he nearly sat down on the road again. ‘Hould on till I get me pipe’—an’ he begins gropin’ all over himself.

“Prisintly, he out wi’ an ould briar pipe, takes out a match, an’ reaches for the leg av his breeches wi’ it.

“‘Hould on, hould on, man !’ I shouts. ‘Do ye want to desthroy yourself an me too?’

“‘What’s wrong wi’ ye ?’ sez he, blinkin’ at me.

“‘Look here, me dacint fellow,’ sez I, ‘if ye light that match on your breeches, an’ them soakin’ wi’ paraffin, they’ll burn through to your inside in about two minits or less, and thin,’ sez I, ‘judgin’ be your breath, ye’ll blow

up. Away intil the middle av the nixt field if ye're on for that. I've me wife an' family to think av.'

"Niver mind then," sez he, puttin' up the pipe, an' takin' the bicycle handles from me; "gimme another shove. Aisier a wee bit nor the last; for me head's a bit light wi' the fall."

"This time we done the trick. Away he goes like a good one, the machine spittin' like a mangerfull av cats. But he wasn't more than fifty yards up the road whin off bumps his lamp. I could see him grippin' the brakes.

"Now, you've done it," sez I. An' sure enough so he had.

"The machine stood on the front wheel for a minit, emptied him off on the road, an' thin come down on him with a souse would ha' made jelly av a sober man.

"Up I runs an' pulls the bicycle off him again. But when I turned to see if he was dead, he was on his feet again as full av pluck as iver.

"I got off for me lamp," sez he.

"I noticed that," sez I. "An' ye'll stay off too. I don't want to waste a day on a Crown'r's jury, an' the potatoes comin' out. Sit down on the ditch, and we'll have a crack till ye come round a bit."

"I can't," sez he, "I must be in Belfast the

night, an' I've a long way to go. Gimme hoult, an' I'll push her along a bit, an' thin get on'; an' he takes the handles.

"The machine leans away from him a bit as if it wasn't very sure av him, he overbalances, slides across the paraffin tank on his belly, stands on his head on the far side for a minit, an' thin rowls over intil the ditch.

"'Look now,' sez I, as I pulls him up again, 'ye'd betther finish the performance wi' that, for if ye won't sit down an' have sense, I'm goin' home; an' I'll take the bicycle wi' me.'

"'What's your name?' sez he, takin' me by the hand.

"'Murphy,' sez I, 'Pat Murphy, if that's any good to ye.'

"'Well, listen to me, Pat Murphy,' sez he. 'If iver man or woman offers ye champagne on an empty stomach, don't you take it, that's all; especially if you're goin' to take whisky afther it.'

"'I'll promise,' sez I. 'The next time Molly brings home champagne for me supper, I'll make her drink it herself.'

"'You're jokin' now,' sez he; 'but I was givin' ye good advice. An' if iver ye *should* get a dose av it, go home on your feet. Champagne an' mothor bicyclin' is two different kinds av amusements,' sez he, 'an' should be kept separate.'

"'Where did ye get it, anyway?' sez I. 'It's mighty scarce in these parts, I'd think.'

"'I'll sit down,' sez he, 'if I must, an' tell ye all about it.'

"'I was up at a big garden-party at Lord—Lord-knobs-who,' sez he, 'it doesn't matter much—writin' a report av the proceedin's for a newspaper—'

"'Is writin' your thrade, thin?' sez I, breakin' in.

"'Just that,' sez he. 'Why?'

"'Oh, nothin,' sez I, 'but I often wished I had some skill av it.'

"'What'd ye do if ye had?' sez he. "Sure there's nothin' to write about here?'

"'Is there not?' sez I. 'I tell ye what it is, if some av you writin' chaps was to come down intil the countrry instead of writin' about it from the towns, ye'd do well be it; for if ye only know'd, there's a dale av good crack to be picked up.'

"'What about?' sez he. 'Potatoes an' cabbages?'

"'Men an' wimmen,' sez I, 'betther av both than ye can show in the town, an' more variety av them. Sure you townspeople is all as like as peas in a pod, an' any notion ye have in your heads ye get it out av the papers. There's fun in the countrry too. It vexes me

to hear people talkin' about it bein' quiet an' dull. It may be ; but I niver seen three or four people gathered about a four-roads but they riz a bit av a laugh before they wint home. I've heard more good stories, too, round a counthry fireside av a Sathurday night than would make a betther book than a good many that's goin' about.'

"Tell me wan or two while I'm sittin' here,' sez he. 'I can take them in now. That last knock has settled me brains.'

"It's well it didn't settle him on the side av the road,' sez I. 'Ye must carry him in a brave thick case. But wait till I get out the pipe, an' here goes. A while more av a rest 'll do ye no harm.'

"So I tould him the first wan or two stories come intil me head, an' he was well plased. Ivery now an' thin he'd break out in a snirt av a laugh, an' slap himself on the knee, till if I'd been rale sure 'twas the stories was doin' it I'd ha' been as well plased as himself.

"I'd always had the name in the counthry av tellin a good story ; but I'd niver thried me hand on a town man before.

"They're good,' sez he, at the last, 'they're good. I believe you're right ; people would laugh at thim.'

"I'm not so sure av that,' sez I.

"Why?' sez he. 'Didn't I laugh?'

"'Ay, but,' sez I, 'iverybody hasn't come fresh from a garden party.'

"'Tut,' sez he, lookin a bit foolish, 'there's nothin' the matther wi' me now. I'll tell ye what, though,' sez he. 'It's time I was out av this'—lookin' at his watch—'but I'll be dhrivin' back on the bicycle to Dublin to-morrow, and if ye'll show me where to find ye, I'll stop awhile an' thry the stories on spring wather. If they stand that, they'll do. Ye can tell me two or three more, an' I'll fix thim up a bit.'

"'Divil a fix,' sez I. 'Ye'll just put them down as I tell them to ye. There come a man here wanst an' got two or three cracks av the countrhy-side, but he only spoiled them. Between cuttin' out this to keep them ginteel, an' puttin' in that to give them a tone, whin he had done they were nayther wan thing or another. There's no use stickin' in big long college words in plain countrhy people's crack. It's like puttin' a cloth patch on a pair av cordhuroys. Come down the morrow an' put a story or two down for me just as ye get thim, an' I'll pay ye anythin' in raison for your throuble.'

"'Ye'll pay me nothin',' sez he. 'I owe ye a skinful av whole bones, an' ye can take it out in ink an' paper. If they look well whin they're copied we might do somethin' wi' thim. Give me a shove now. I'll see you to-morrow.'

"The nixt day he come out sure enough,

an' another two Sundays afther that, an' was in big heart about printin' the stories. Thin for a long while I heard no word av him, an' at last there come the big parcel av paper ye have there, an' a letter to say he was away in London an' couldn't come out any more, but he'd sent what stories he'd wrote down an' wished me luck wi' them.

"The parcel lay in the cupboard iver since, for I didn't know what to do wi' it ; till comin' up to Belfast the day to the sale I bethought meself av you, Misther Doyle, an' put it in me pocket to show to ye.

"An' if, as ye say, ye'll face puttin' it in print, there'll nobody be betther plazed than I will. Do ye think it will do ?"

"We'll try, anyhow, Pat," I said. "Is there anything you'd like to add ?"

"Divil a word, Misther Doyle," he answered, "if I have my way av it."

"You wouldn't like to describe Ballygullion and the country round it ?"

"Betther not," he said. "Thim that reads till the end'll know as much about Ballygullion as is good for him—or me, either. I don't want to be hunted out av the countrhy wi' a pitchfork."

"Very well, Pat," I said." "I'll have the manuscript printed as it stands."



I feel it due to myself to say that I have rigidly kept my word. The readers of the following pages are consequently looking at Ballygullion through the eyes of Mr. Patrick Murphy.

CHAPTER II

THE WIDOW

It's a terrible thing when a man gets money, an' him has no sense. An' I niver knowed a betther parable av it than Pether O'Hare.

Iverybody in the country knowed Pether, an' though few had anything but a good word for him, ye niver heard them say he was much bothered wi' brains.

He was a thin wallop av a fellow wi' limbs that loose ye'd ha' thought he was hung on wires, an' a long miserable face like a goat's, barrin' the beard.

As I said, there was always a soft dhrap in Pether, but, till the uncle died an' left him six hundhred pounds, nobody knowed how big a fool he was.

As long as he had only the father's place he could cut no capers, but the minit he got the money he begin to act the goat. First he was for buildin' a bit to the house, an' he thought he'd make two stories av it, to be gran'. But

whin the mason had got up all but the roof. Pether took it intil his head that the two stories av the new bit would affront the ould wan-storied part, an' couldn't make up his mind whether he would even up the whole house by raisin' the ould part a story, or even it down by pullin' a story off the new. He thramped the whole counthry-side askin' advice, but niver came any furdher ; for if wan man would advise him wan way, on the road home he was sure to meet somebody would advise him the other, an' between the two advisin's he'd do nothin'. if he iver did get near makin' up his mind, ould Jemmy the stone-mason would throw in some objection that would set his head shug-gelty-shooin' again. For ould Jemmy was no ways fond av work, an' as long as he was dhrawin' his pay for slungein' about the yard wi' a pipe in his mouth he was as happy as a sow in a sheugh.

The end av it was Pether put a sort av a roof on the first siory an' let the walls for the second stan', till he'd think about it, as he said.

An' it was the same wi' iverything else. He got in men to dig a well, an' whin it was half dug, somebody tould him a pump was the thing. He bought a pump the next day.

But whin it come to borin' for it, he thought it would cost him too much, so he begin to considher whether the well wouldn't be

best afther all. In the manetime he let the side av his ould well fall in, thinkin' the new wan or the pump would be ready anytime, an' had to carry wather from the river, that cost him the wages av a man ; forbye that a two-year old bullock fell intil the shaft for the new well an' broke its leg.

Wi' wan fool thrick an' another like this, Pether was makin' the money fly, an' iverybody begin to see it wouldn't last long if somethin' didn't happen. But sure enough, somethin' did happen that cured Pether av wastin' his money, though maybe he wasn't a dale betther off.

I seen near the beginnin' av it meself. It was this way.

Av an odd night I would maybe ddrop down to the Widow Magorrian's for a crack. There was always good crack to be had there, too ; but the widow was the terror av the countrhy tor her tongue. Ye maybe wouldn't have thought that to spake till her, for she was as sweet as honey if ye were in wi' her ; but let ye cross her, an' ye might give in your gun at wanst.

Sorrow a word ye'd get in edgeways ; an' the angrier she got the louder she got, till she fair barged ye down. But she was the best av good company for all that, if ye'd only sit an' listen to her blackguardin' her neighbours, an' niver let on ye knowed your own turn would come as soon as your back was turned.

Whin I dhropped in as usual wan night, who should I see sittin' by the fireside wi' a saucer av tay in his hand but Pether O'Hare, lookin' mighty comfortable, barrin' that his feet were a bit in his road.

I thought the widow was a bit cool whin I wint in, an' I couldn't make it out at first. But in a wee while I seen the whole thing. The widow was makin' a set at Pether. It tuk me some time to take it in, for Pether wasn't above eight-an'-twinty, an' the widow was fifteen years more if she was a day, but there was no doubt av it at all.

Ye'd ha' taken your end at her. It was "another cup av tay, Misther O'Hare," an' "thry a bit av toast," or "dhraw neardher the fire." All the time she was hangin' round him smirkin' an' smilin', as foolish lookin' as an ould cat playin' wi a spool.

"I've just been tellin' him, Misther Murphy," sez she to me, "that he's clane lost wi' no woman about the place. It's goin' to wreck an' ruin for the want av wan."

"He should get married. Mrs. Magorrian," sez I. "'Twould be the makin' av him."

"I've been tellin' him that meself ivery time he's been here, an' he's been comin' here a good dale lately," sez she, wi' a look between soft an' sharp at Pether, to see how he'd take it.

"Come, Pether," sez I, "ye should take good advice. Pull yourself together, man."

But poor Pether was shiftin' about on his sate lookin' very warm, for the divil a shyer man was in the county ; an' not a word more, good or bad, did he say that night till we both riz to go home.

All the same whin he was sayin' "good-night" to the widow he mutthered an' mumbled at it, an' got very red. I could see the widow was well plazed, an' troth it looked like the thing a bit.

"Niver mind me if I don't put a spoke in your wheel, ye ould divil ye," sez I to meself, as I left ; for it seemed a mortal pity to let the poor fellow walk into such a man-thrap wi' his eyes shut.

However, there was no need. Before we were well out av hearin', Pether turns to me. "I'm thinkin' av takin' the widow's advice," sez he.

"Are ye, Pether ?" sez I. "An' who's Mrs. O'Hare that's goin' to be ? I heard ye were runnin' afther Rose Dorrian."

"No," sez he, "it's not Rose, though she's a fine girl enough. What would ye think av Brian Connor's daughter?" sez he, wi' a nervous kind av a titther.

"Whoop," sez I to meself, "the widow's done." "She's a brave fine girl," sez I out to

Pether. "Ye'll not get much wi' her, though, I'm thinkin'."

"Well, well," sez Pether, "niver mind. I've enough for both. D'ye think she'd take me, though, Pat?" sez he, in a hesitatin' sort av a way.

"Ye'll have to ask her wi' more spunk than that," sez I. "Whin are ye goin' to face?"

"I'm goin' round the morrow evenin'," sez he, "afther quittin' time. Brian was tellin' me him an' the wife was goin' intil Ballygullion. There'll be nobody at home but Mary."

"H'm," thinks I, "Brian's afther ye, too."

"Well, good fortune to ye, Pether," sez I. "I'll maybe meet ye comin' home an' hear what luck ye have."

The next night about a quarther past six or so, I dandhers down to the widow's to tell her the news. Ye niver seen a woman more cut in all your days, though she let on to laugh very hearty at the idea av Pether coortin'.

"Mary Connor'll niver take him," sez she ; "sure she's only a slip av a girl compared to Pether. Did ye say he was goin' round the night?"

"He's there long ago," sez I, lookin' at the wag-at-the-wall. "He'll be comin' back any time."

"Well, I'll not keep ye, Misther Murphy, if you're goin' home. Good evenin'," sez she.

"Ye might pull the door afther ye." An away she goes up the house in a terrible hurry.

I laughs a bit to meself thinkin' she was gettin' out av the way for fear I'd see she was put about. Howiver, out I goes, an' up the road, nixt Brian's.

"I wondher what shape Pether makes at the coortin'," thinks I.

There was more than me wondhered too, especially as things turned out, but 'twas many a long day before I heard the rights av it from Mary Connor herself.

Whin the father an' mother wint out that night, an' tould Mary Pether was comin' round, she knowed she was in for it right enough, an' divil a bit could she make up her mind. As she said, she had no great notion av Pether, an' I believed her there; but then she had nobody else in her eye. The father an' mother, too, was always bummin' up Pether's money, an' Pether's farm an' new house, whin they seen him makin' a shape afther her. An' in spite av all they say in books, in the countrry it's money makes the mare go, in the marryin' way as well as everything else. Maybe the town girls is different, but I have me doubts.

So it was hard to tell how Pether's case was likely to go.

Ye'd ha' laughed to hear Mary mimickin' Pether comin' into the house, wi' his knees

thrimmlin' wi' narvousness, an' a long frightened lookin' face. First he near brained himself on a ham that was hangin' from the roof,—for Brian's house isn't very big ; an' thin droppin' intil the neardhest chair for fear av another crack on the skull, he sat on the cat. Be that time, as Mary said, he hardly knowed his own name, an' faith I could well believe her.

Another time Mary would ha' laughed, an' thin Pether was done ; but she wasn't altogether at her aise herself, so he got time to gather himself together, an' afther he got the pipe lit he begin to feel more at himself.

For a long while he sat smokin' an talkin' av the weather an' the crops, till Mary thought he was niver comin' to business.

But she could see he wasn't mindin' much what he was sayin', an' at last he stops short.
"Miss Connor," sez he,—

"Misther O'Hare," sez she.

For a minit he stuck clane, an' thin it all came out in a rush. "I'm lookin' for a wife, Miss O'Connor," sez he, "would ye face?"

Thin it was Mary's turn to be bothered ; for although she knowed fine what was comin' all along, she was still in a swither what to do.

An' whin Pether seen that, he picks up more spunk than you'd ha' thought, pops the pipe in his breeches pocket, an' before Mary knowed

where she was he was sittin' on the dhresser beside her wi' his arm round her waist. Even Mary gives in that wanst he was started he didn't shape so badly at the coortin'; an' wi' that an' the thought av the place an' the six hundred pounds, she made up her mind at last.

"I'll take him," sez she till herself. "He's more av a man than I thought, an' I'll make a betther wan av him by the time I have him a while."

An' Lord knows but she would. There's no tellin', howiver; for just as she turns round to say the word, Pether gives a screech, dhrops her waist, an' begins runnin' round the kitchen like a scalded dog, all the time batin' at his leg wi' his hand.

"What is it, Misther O'Hare?" cries Mary. "What's wrong wi' ye, at all, at all?"

"I'm burned," sez Pether, "Oh Hivenly Thomas," sez he, the tears runnin' down his face wi' the pain, "I'm roasted! Fetch me a handful av flour, or I'm disfigured for life!"

Away goes Mary runnin' to the flour barrel. "What's done it, anyway?" sez she. "Where are ye burned?" An' thin Pether looks down at himself.

"Keep back, Miss Connor!" sez he, an' wi' that he makes a dash for the wall, an' stan's there wi' his wan side up again it. An' 'deed not a minit too soon, as far as I could gather.

It seems in the flurry av the coortin' Pether had put the pipe in his breeches pocket alive. All the time he was coortin' the pipe was burnin' in his pocket, an' before it reached the skin there was the breadth av your two palms burned out av his cordhuroys.

So 'twas no wondher he made for the wall. 'Twould ha' bothered anybody, but for a modest man like Pether 'twas fair terrible.

An' troth he was the most put out av the two ; for, afther all, whin a girl has grew up on a farm till she's ready for a man, between wan thing an' another she's not as squeamish over thrifles as wan av your town wimmen lets on to be.

So Mary was thinkin' more av Pether's burn than av the hole in his breeches that was botherin' him.

"Here," sez she, givin' him the handful av flour ; "away up to me father's room an' rub that on yourself. An' if ye look round, ye'll see a pair of——ye'll see some clothes," sez she, "that'll maybe fit ye."

Be this time she could see that Pether's modesty was more hurt than his leg, an' the whole thing begin to sthrike her on the funny side. But she held out till Pether started for the room, wi' the wan hand full av flour, an' the other houldin' the cordhuroys together, all the time him kepin' an eye on Mary, an' movin' along the wall like a cow scratchin' herself.

An' thin she could hould out no longer, but down she sits on a chair an' laughs, an' rocks herself back an' forward in the chair laughin', till she got a stitch in her side. But ivery time she thought av Pether off she wint again, an' whin he come back intil the kitchen wi' a pair av Brian's breeches on him that hardly come till his ancles, an' the ould cordhuroys in a parcel undher his arm, she hadn't more than half laughed herself out, an' wint intil a fresh kink.

If Pether had had the sinse to bide his time he'd ha' been all right, for Mary wasn't ill-natured, an' wouldn't ha' hurted his feelin's if she'd ha' known it ; but instead av that the gomeril gets angry, an' afther thryin' to get in a word or two, an' Mary still laughin' and niver listenin' till him, out he flings in the devil's own rage, an' up the road cursin' an' swearin' all ways.

He wasn't much more than started whin I met him.

"What luck, Pether?" sez I, though I knowed what luck be the look av him.

"Luck," sez he, spluttherin' wi' rage, "luck! What luck could a dacent man have wi' a fool av a girl that has nothin' in her mind but girnin' an' laughin'? But I'll tache her," sez he, "I'll tache her! I'll not run afther her, not if she was 'my lady.' Be the holy fly," sez he, pushin' past me, "I'll ask the first woman I meet!" an' away he pelts down the road nixt home.

Away I goes afther him to quiet him down a bit ; but I couldn't take up wi' him, an' before I was long started who should pop out av a loanin' but the Widow Magorrian. She'd come a short cut across the fields.

An' hang her, she couldn't look plased at seein' me.

"Humph," sez she, "Misther Murphy ; we have the luck av meetin'."

"That's thtrue enough, mem," sez I. "I've been meetin' you an' Pether O'Hare brave an' often lately."

"Did ye meet Pether?" sez she, wi' her lip dhroppin'.

"Just a minit ago," sez I. "He's away down the road in a powerful rage."

"What!" sez she, lookin' betther plased ; "would Mary not take him?"

"It's more than that," sez I. "She's affronted him some way or other, an' he's away down the road swearin' he'llask the first woman he meets."

"He wouldn't do that, surely," sez she, wi' the eyes dancin' in her head. "Do you think would he?"

"There's no tellin' what a fool crather like Pether'd do whin the notion's on him," sez I.

"I hope he'll fall intil no bad hands," sez she. "I think I'll just slip back across the fields. I might meet him an' give him a bit av advice."

"I'll walk that length wi' ye," sez I, for divilnint, seein' what she was afther.

"Would ye not think av callin' in on Mary, an' hearin' what happened? Ye should," sez she. "Go on. I'll just go home meself."

"Well," sez I, "maybe I'd betther." So I turned away as if I was goin' back, an' the widow she intil the loanin' again.

Afther a step or two I slips back an' looks up the loanin'. Man, ye should ha' seen the pelt av her up it. Be the hokey, ye'd ha' thought she was a two-year-old, to see the lepps av her. 'Twas as well she didn't know I was lookin'. She had her skirts well kilted up for the runnin', an' she made no great sight, I can tell ye; for she was beef to the heels like a Mullin-gar heifer, as the sayin' is.

"Now, Pat," sez I to meself, "away wi' ye afther Pether an' ye'll see sport this night." So I off at a trot till I come in sight av him, an' thin I slackens down an' just keeps me distance behind him.

"Hiven send some dacent girl in his way," sez I, "before he meets the widow, for there's no tellin' what he'd do, he's that thrawin'."

The words wasn't out av me mouth till round the turn comes Rose Dorrian.

"Hooh!" sez I, "the widow's done again."

Rose was no beauty, but she'd pass in a crowd, an' her father had a brave place, an' was well to

do. An' as I tould ye, Pether had some notion av her before he fixed on Mary Connor.

So I gets down behind a whin to see what would happen.

Both av them stopped. I could see Pether was talkin' very hard, an' Rose sayin' very little. Then they begin to dandher next me. I slips over the ditch, an' whin I keeked out in a bit they were stopped again, an' Pether had his arm round Rose an' was wrasslin' for a kiss.

"Quit now, Misther O'Hare," I could hear Rose sayin'. Thin Pether says somethin' I didn't catch.

"I'll tell ye the morrow whin I sleep on it," sez Rose. "Let me go now,—I'll tell ye the morrow sure, if ye come up till the house. Good-bye, Misther O'Hare. Ah, now, let me go!" But Pether was set on a kiss, an' this time he got it.

An' thin in the middle av the tusslin', round the bend av the road comes the widow. In troth 'twas a regular circus.

I couldn't see her face that far, but I could guess her feelin's when she boulted back round the turn ; an' deed, God forgive me, I sat down behind the ditch an' laughed till me sides was sore.

Now if Pether had been a man like anybody else, there was nothin' more to do but marry Rose an' have done wi' it, for any wan might

ha' seen wi' half an eye she was for takin' him ; but it wouldn't ha' been Pether if he had acted like another body.

No sooner did he get home but he begin to think he'd been in too big a hurry wi' Rose. "Afther all," thinks he, "Mary didn't refuse me, an' I might get her yet if I only bide me time." An' there was no denyin' that Rose couldn't hould a candle till her as far as looks went.

But he had asked Rose, there was no denyin' that either ; an' she looked terrible like takin' him. There was hardly any gettin' out av it.

Afther all, too, Mary had made a complete mock av him ; an' he begin to get angry wi' Mary again.

In the end he made up his mind to stick till Rose. But he'd ddrop round to Brian's wi' the breeches the nixt evenin', an' let Mary know she'd missed her market, just for spite.

As luck would have it, the night av Pether's misfortune Brian Connor came home from Ballygullion betther nor half full, as he very often did, an' whin he gathered from Mary that Pether had asked her, an' she hadn't took him, he begin to rampage round the house an' blackguard Mary right an' left ; an' ended wi' makin' a race at her wi' the poker an' huntin' her to bed for her life.

It wasn't the first time Brian had carried on

like that ; an' as Mary lay thinkin' in bed, it come intil her mind that ~~she~~ couldn't be worse off if she took Pether, an' she begin to blame herself for not having more sense. For she thought Pether was gone for good.

So whin he come round the nixt day she thought ~~she~~ was havin' betther luck than she deserved, an' was mighty civil to him, an' excused herself as well as she could for laughin' at him, till Pether was that flatthered at the idea av Mary makin' up till him that he begin to persuade himself Rose wouldn't take him afther all. The long an' short av it was he wint out av the house promised to Mary, an' wi' two glasses av Brian's bad whiskey in him to celebrate the occasion.

His heart was well up wi' the dhrift av dhrink, an' he thought he'd just face up to Rose's an' get out av the difficulty the best way he could, an' have it over.

All the same, whin he got near the house he wasn't just as sure that Rose wouldn't take him as whin he was sittin' wi' his arm round Mary; an' he begin to wish himself in the nixt county.

Whin he got the length av the house Rose wasn't in. But 'twas all the worse. The father an' mother had heard all about it from her, an' wi' them crackin' up Pether's money she had soon made up her mind. So divil a word did Pether get sayin' till the ould man out wi' the

bottle, too ; an' before he knowed where he was, he was dhrinkin' to his weddin' for the second time that day, an' wishin' it was to his funeral.

In the middle av it in comes Rose. Be this time Pether's bits av brains was clane muddled between the dhrink an' the fix he was in ; an' the end av it was, afther sittin' an hour in the kitchen wi' Rose on his knee, he got out an' tore off up to my house like a ragin' lunatic.

It tuk me some time to find out from him what had happened ; an' whin I did come to the rights av it I couldn't laugh, much as I wanted till. The crayther was ready for the asylum as it was.

Howaniver, all I could think av, I could only give him cowld comfort ; an' whin he seen I wasn't likely to do him much good, he sez "good-night," an' goes off in a sort av a dazed way.

"Are ye goin' home, Pether ?" sez I ; for I was afeard he might go an' throw himself in a bog-hole, or somethin' desperate like that, wi' the state he was in.

"I'll just call in at the widow's," sez he. "She's a brave, knowledgeable woman, an' maybe she'll help me out." An' away he wint.

I've thought many a time since he'd been betther an' tuk the bog-hole for it.

For three or four days I heard nothin' more

av Pether's affairs, an' thin wan evenin', just before dusk, as I was sittin' at the door, I hears a clattherin', an' there was first Rose Dorrian's father an' a neighbour man, an' behind thim Brian Connor an' his brother-in-law, comin' up the road like fury.

"Bad cess to it, Molly," sez I to the wife, "here's more botheration." For I'd tould Molly the whole story.

"The devil's cure to ye," sez she. "You're always pokin' your nose intil the affairs av the whole countrypside, an' givin' advice."

"Well, well, Molly," sez I, "sure nobody iver takes it, an' there's no harm done."

"You'd betther lave the advisin' to somebody else this time, anyway," sez she. "It'll take a wiser head than yours to clear this up."

"You're not far wrong, Molly," sez I. "But hould your tongue, here they come."

"Do ye know where Pether O'Hare is to be found, Misther Murphy?" begins ould Dorrian, lookin' as black as thunder.

"I do not," sez I. "What about him?"

"Do ye know," sez he, "he was promised to me daughter Rose a week ago?"

"I heard a whimper av it," sez I.

"Aw, did ye?" sez Brian Connor. "Thin maybe ye know he's promised to our Mary the same day."

"What!" sez I. "Sure he can't be promised to thim both?"

"But he is," sez he. "The villain has made a common story av me girl in the countrhy, ay, an' av Rose Dorrian, too. He's mad," sez he, "or worse. But let me only get at him. Oh, if I only could get me hands on him! But I can't. He's not at his own house. The yard-boy tould us he was down at the Widow Magorrian's, an' whin we wint there, the house was shut up. I'll get him yet, though," sez he, "an' thin God help him. Be hivins, I'll bate his head till a pulp."

"We'll bate nothin' at him," sez ould Dorrian. "We'll just go into Fitzsimons's, the lawyer's to-morrow, an' enther a breach again him, both av us."

"Oh, boys a boys," sez I to meself, "this'll settle poor Pether all out. Sure wan breach av promise near ruined Tim Dougherty, an' two'll not lave Pether a screw at all. There's little use av me thryin' to stop thim; but I wondher would they listen to Lame Hughey down the road?"

Hughey had the name in the countrhy av knowin' more about law than a counsellor, though like many another man he come aisy by it.

'Twas all over a lump av a lamb he got dhrowned in a march ditch, an' tuk an action

again his neighbour, Tammas M'Gimpsey, for. Hughey maintained that Tammas should ha' kept the ditch clane, an' Tammas maintained the baste would only ha' been dhrowned the sooner if the ditch *had* been clane. Besides, he said, if it had 'a had any sense it wouldn't ha' been in the ditch at all. So they wint to Coort, an' afther a power av law, Hughey was bate, an' lost five or six times the value av the lamb; an' that gave him a scunner again law and lawyers that just made his name for iver. If there was word av law between two neighbours, Hughey would hauchle round to thim both an' invite him down to talk it over ; an' between lettin' on to know near as much as a judge, an' frightenin' them wi' what had happened to him over the lamb, he settled more law-suits than would ha' kept a whole Bench busy.

So "I'll tell ye what ye'll do," sez I, " before ye go to any lawyers. Ye'll both go down to Lame Hughey's an' hear what he has to say. It's an awkward case, a double breach av promise. I niver heard av wan before."

"It's good advice Pat," sez them both ; an' away we wint, ould Dorrian walkin' wi' me.

"I wouldn't ha' minded the affront half as much, Pat," sez he, as we wint along, "if it wasn't for my girl bein' evened to Brian Connor's daughter, an' him little betther nor a labourin' man. That's what sticks in megizzard."

An' av coarse I said he was right.
Thin just as we were goin' in to Hughey's,
Brian stopped me.

"Did ye iver hear the like av it, Pat," sez he, "affrontin' a good-lookin' girl like our Mary wi' askin' that wee dwarf av a Dorrian girl. I'm angrier about that than anythin' else," sez he.

"Well, well, Brian," sez I, "ivery eye has its own beauty. But I have me own idea av it."

Thin in the four av us wint ; an' afther a power av talkin' we got Hughey insensed intil the case.

"Can't we both take a breach agin him," sez Brian, "or how will we fix him ?"

Hughey sits for a while an' says nothin', lookin' wiser than I believe any man could be.

"It seems to me, boys," sez he at the last, "yez are both bate for goin' to law at all."

"How do ye make that out ?" sez ould Dorrian.

"Well," sez he, "it's this way. A man can only marry wan woman."

"At a time," sez I.

"At a time," sez he. "But he can't marry two at a time, for the law won't let him. It's the only sensible thing I ever heard about the law. Now," sez he, "if a man says, 'I'll not marry two wimmen,' the law says 'you're right,

for if ye do, I'll nail ye.' An' if the two av ye come at him, an' Pether says 'I'll not marry your two girls,' he's only keepin' the law ; an' how are ye goin' to take an action again him for keepin' the law ?" sez he, lookin' round us all, " tell me that."

" Be the powers," sez Brian, " there's a dale in what ye say."

" But more than that," Hughey goes on ; " if the two av yez comes agin him thegither, it's odds but the law gets at ye for thryin' to make him commit bigamy, an' that's a sayrious business. Do ye mind that sodger at the last sessions got six months for bigamy. An' eggin' a man on till it's near as bad as the thing itself, if the law tuk it that way," sez Hughey.

" The law would niver take it that way," sez ould Dorrian, a bit unaisy-like.

" There's no tellin' what the law would do," sez Hughey. " Whin ye get intil it ye can niver tell how you'll get out. Did ye iver hear about me an' the lamb ?"

" Oh, ay," sez we all mighty quick. We were all purty sick av that same lamb.

" Fifteen pound it cost me," sez Hughey, " an' it not worth more than two. Boys," sez he, lookin' round very sayrious, " the law's a desperate business. Keep out av it if ye can."

" But what are we to do ?" sez ould Dorrian. " Are we to lie down undher the affront ?"

"Ye should settle," sez Hughey; "an' I'll tell ye how. Wan av ye must go up wi' a friend for witness an' put it till him that ye hear he's afther another girl, an' if he wants to back out av yours ye'll not be too hard on him for ould acquaintance sake, but ye'll let him free for a hundred pound. He'll jump at it or me name's not Hughey."

"That's right enough for wan," breaks in Brian; "but what about the other?"

"Well," sez Hughey, "Pether'll be clear av wan thin, an' can marry the other."

"Rose'll niver look at him now," sez ould Dorrian; "an' I wouldn't let her, even if she was willin' to."

"An' be me sowl he'll niver warm the same blankets wi' Mary, afther the dirty thrick he's played her," sez Brian, "not if he was the Imperor of Rooshia."

"Then I'm bate," sez Hughey. "There's only one av yez can come at him if I know anythin'. It's the first man in," sez he.

An' thin I could see ould Dorrian eyein' Brian, an' Brian eyein' him back, an' I knowed rightly each av them was thinkin' how he'd best the other.

At last Brian gets to his feet. "We'll lave it over for the present," sez he, "till we think more about it. John an' me'll walk up to your house for an hour, Pat," sez he to me, lookin' at the brother-in-law.

"Ay do, boys—do," sez ould Dorrian, "an' we two'll just push on home. There's no use thryin' to do anythin' now. Sure it's dark night."

"Pat," sez he to me in a whisper, as we wint out, "keep Brian at your house for a bit. I'll go down the road home a piece for a blind, an' thin I'll turn back an' thry an' get hould av Pether. He's sure to be home be this time. Brian's little betther nor a fool, an' if he got there first he might do harm."

"Ah, ye ould sarpint," sez I to meself, "is that your game? But I'll gunk ye."

So whin we got up the road a bit, afther ould Dorrian an' the friend had gone off be way av goin' home, "Brian," sez I, "ye'll niver have a betther chance. Away wi' you an' John up till Pether's now, an' get your blow in first." For I thought ould Dorrian deserved no betther for his thrickery.

"That's me intention," sez Brian. "Did ye think I was a fool?"

"Bad cess to ye," sez I undher me breath, "you're as bad as the other wan. Well, well, the ould fellow'll be there near as soon as you, anyway; an' then there'll be music!"

Whin we come to Pether's loanin' I bid the two av them good-night, an' thin slipped on afther them, walkin' in the ditch-side for fear they'd hear me.

"I've been in most av the piece," sez I, "an' I'll see it out."

Brian an' the brother-in-law made good speed, an' were up beside Pether's in a crack. I could hear no word av ould Dorrian behind me.

"Ye ould fool," thinks I, "you're bamboozled." For in troth, seein' the wan was as foxy as the other, I was loth to see Brian get the betther av him now.

But luck was agin Brian. Just that minit out comes Pether's dog from wan av the out-houses wi' a snarl an' a rush.

"Chew, Chew, sir!" shouts the brother-in-law, jumpin' back off the road; an' wi' that he steps, souse! until Pether's half-made well.

"What's wrong?" sez Brian. "Where are ye, John?"

"Here," sez the other, "up till me shouldhers in a hole, an' up till me ankles in mud. Give me a help out, Brian," sez he, afther a sprauchle or two, "I can't manage it. Bad cess to it anyway," sez he, "me breeches is spoiled."

"Wait," sez Brian. "Where's your hand? I can't see ye at all."

"Over a bit," sez the brother-in-law, "over yet. Hould on!" sez he wi' a shout. But he was too late. Whether Brian had overreached himself, or thrapped, I don't know, but in he goes head-foremost.

I'll niver forget it. There was the two av them in the well, the brother-in-law cursin' at the top, an' Brian cursin' twice as much at the bottom. I could hear Brian's voice from the bottom av the hole, like a cow roarin' through a byre wall—"Oh, merciful hivin, I'm killed. I'm smothered. Oh, John dear, pull me out, pull me out!"

"Hould on, hould on, Brian," sez the brother-in-law, "till I thry an' get out meself. Keep quiet, man," sez he, as Brian gave a spang; "ye're kickin' in me teeth. Wait now, I'm out. I've me foot on a stone."

"Come off me head!" sez Brian, wi' a yell.
"Do ye want to smother me?"

"What's to be done at all, at all?" sez the brother-in-law, "I'm clane bate."

"Shout for help," sez Brian, "quick, before I'm choked."

At that I thought it was time for me to intherfere, so I runs forrad, an' had both av them out in a twinklin'. They were both in such a way they niver thought av askin' how I come there.

Just as we had done clanin' Brian up a bit, we hears steps, an' up comes ould Dorrian an' the friend. 'Twould be hard to tell which was the most cut av the four av them.

"I just thought I'd see Pether the night," sez ould Dorrian.

"So did I," sez Brian.

"I niver dhramed av seein' you here," sez ould Dorrian.

"Ye were the last man I expected to see meself. Here," sez Brian, "there's no use talkin'. We were both thryin' to take a short cut on each other. But, now we're here, be me sowl, we'll have it out wi' Pether—if it's wi' a stick," sez he, very wicked ; for he was terrible wild about fallin' in the well. "Damn ould Hughey," sez he, "he's an ould fool. Come on, boys." Up he goes to Pether's door, opens it, an' in ; an' we in afther him.

Ye could ha' knocked me down wi' a feather.

There was Pether on wan side av the fire, an' on the other who but the widow Magorrian, wi' her hat an' coat off, as comfortable as ye plaze.

Pether till his feet, lookin' very white ; but the widow niver budged.

"Good-night, gentlemen," sez she, very cool ; "what might ye be wantin' here at this time av the night ?"

"We want to have a bit av a settlement wi' that villain there," sez Brian, shakin' his fist at Pether, "that has promised to marry two dacint girls, an' made a common laughin' stock av them."

"Well, anythin' ye have to say, just addhress yerself to me," sez the widow, still very cool.

"What the devil business is it av yours ?"

sez Brian. He wasn't much given to politeness at any time, let alone whin he was angry.

"It's this business," sez the widow, "that him an' me is man an' wife since twelve o'clock the day ; that's the business av mine, it is."

Brian gives a whoop. "Be me sowl," sez he, "we have ye now, Pether. We'll roast ye," sez he, "if there's law in Ireland. We can both come at him, Misther Dorrian, afther this. Make the most av your man, Mrs. O'Hare," sez he, wi' a mock at her ; "for we'll not lave ye much else."

The widow lepps to her feet at that, an' man, the sparks was near flyin' out av her.

"An' is that what the pair av yez is afther, ye two greedy beagles ?" sez she. "I was goin' to let yez off aisy, for all ye were so imperint ; because, thinks I, maybe Pether *has* had a bit av a hand out av your girls, though small blame to him whin they were threw at his head. But ye can take it now, an' make the most av it. Do ye see that ?" sez she, pullin' a paper out av her breast. "There's what gunks ye. There's a settlement av iverything he has, on me his lawful wife, made out this day in Ballygullion. It's all mine," sez she, wi' a cackle av a laugh, that was more like a scrame, "land, an' houses, an' money, an' all ! An' now," sez she, "come at me man if ye like, an' much good may it do ye."

"Be off wi' ye!" sez she, raisin' her voice higher ivery word, an' workin' herself intil a terrible rage; "be off wi' ye, ye dhrunken scallywag, to your trollop av a daughter, an' get her a man if ye can find wan 'll face you for a father-in-law. An' you, too," sez she, turnin' to ould Dorrian, that was standin' there wi' his mouth hangin' open, "take yourself home to your beauty av a girl, an' tell her she's missed the only chance in life she'll iver have, barrin' she gets a blind man. Ye should be hung, ye ould Judas, thryin' to shove your ugly ducklin' on a dacint boy, an' thin thryin' to rob him whin his stomach turned at her. Away wi' ye, or I'll not keep me hands off ye." An' wi' that she pulls a burnin' stick out av the grate an' makes a run-race at him, an' the poor ould chap, startin' back, thraps over a creepie stool, an' goes slap on the floor.

Wan got between the widow an' him, an' another got him up; an' thin all av us to the door, Brian first.

But ould Dorrian pulls himself away from us, an' stands inside the threshold, all shakin'.

"We're goin'," sez he, "we're goin'. Pether," sez he, "ye're a dirty dog, an' ye've played a dog's thrick on two dacint girls. But keep your mind aisy about us; we'll not soil our fingers wi' your footy money; though maybe we could make ye smart in spite av your

settlements. We've no need to revenge ourselves now. It's been taken out av our hands. We'll just lave ye," sez he, pointin' his ould thrimmlin' hand at the widow; "we'll lave ye to your punishment."

An' thin we come away.

CHAPTER III

THE SILENT DOG

The minit I clapped eyes on the baste I knewed there was an unlucky look about him. But if there was bad luck wi' him sure the most av it fell his own road. It was this way I come across him. Wan afthernoon I was workin' about the yard, whin who should come intil it but wee Mr. Anthony, the solicitor, an' Mr. Barrington av the Bank.

"Good evenin' to yez both," sez I ; "what has shtrayed ye out av Ballygullion the day, gintlemen ?"

"Pat," sez Mr. Anthony, "are ye on for a night's sport ?"

"That'll depend," sez I.

I wasn't goin' to let on what I'd do till I knewed what they were afther. For if it's shootin', sez I to meself, I'm otherwise engaged.

Mr. Anthony's as dacint a wee man as iver stepped,—devil recave the betther ; but a bigger ould dundherhead niver wint out wi' a gun in his fist. Between his short sight, an' his ram-stam way av runnin' at things, it was the

danger av your life to go within a mile av him. Didn't he blow in the end windy av the Presbyterian meetin'-house wan prayer-meetin' night in the month av May, thryin' to shoot a crow off ould Major Dennison's tombstone in the buryin' ground outside ; an' wanst he thrailed me two miles to Ballygreen bog afther a flock av wild geese he said he seen, an' before I could stop him he killed ould Mrs. Murphy's gandher that lives in Drumcrow, an' had to pay her a cowld pound, forbye a new gandher he bought her.

So whin he sez "Are ye on for a night?" thinks I, I'll know what yez are afther first.

"Well, Pat," sez he, "Mr. Barrington an' me has planned to have a night's rabbit-nettin' up at Mr. Hastings's at The Warren—"

"Is it mad yez are?" sez I. "Sure ye'll be right forntent the house, an' the ould gintleman'll hear the first bark ; an' doesn't the whole countrypside know he's a fair lunatic about poachin'?"

"Aye, but," sez Mr. Anthony, "we've got a silent dog."

"A what?" sez I.

"A silent dog," sez he. "A dog, Pat," sez he, "that'll hunt rabbits, or rats—aye or cats," sez he, "an' niver even give a whine. I have him chained to the gate here."

Wi' that he goes round the corner an' fetches back a dog on a chain.

"There he is, Pat," sez he; "an' you wouldn't get a bark out av him if you thrived him for a month."

"Faith," sez I "it's well he's some good points about him, for be me sowl he's no beauty."

An' nayther he was;—a low-set, crooked-legged baste, wi' a dirty brown coat, an' a wee bunty tail. Wan av his ears was half tore off, an' he'd lost two teeth in the front.

"An' what do you think about it, Mr. Barrington?" sez I.

Between ourselves, Mr. Barrington was supposed to be coortin' the youngest wan av the Miss Hastings's, an' I thought it a quare thing if he'd run the risk av a row wi' the ould fellow for the sake av a night's sport.

"There'll be Ould Nick himself to pay if we're catched, an' that'll be no good till any av us," sez I, lookin' hard at him.

"Oh! I know rightly what ye mane, Pat," sez he, "but it doesn't matther. The ould fellow an' me has fell out," sez he, savage-like, "an' I don't mind the chance av a row if I can spite him a bit."

"I'm wi' you there," sez I; "for he's no friend av mine. But what about the dog. Can yez depend on him not to bark?" sez I.

"I tell ye, man," sez Mr. Anthony, "he'll not bark. Hit him a kick," sez he, "an' see if he even whines."

"Hit him a welt yourself, Mr. Anthony," sez I ; "he knows you betther nor me." For there was a quare glitther' in the baste's eye I didn't like.

So Mr. Anthony fetches him a lick wi' the toe av his boot ; an' wi' that the dog turns on him, an' without even a girm, catches him be the ball av the leg, an' houlds on like grim death, worryin' at him. Mr. Anthony he lets a screech an' begins to pull away from the dog.

"Haul him off, Pat !" sez he, "I'm bit till the bone ! Kick the brute. Why don't ye pull him off, Archie ?" sez he, dancin' round on wan leg an' cursin' like a haythen.

As luck would have it, he'd on a pair of them putty leggin's, an' the dog only had his teeth in wan av them ; an' afther the first fright, whin we seen he wasn't likely to be hurt, Mr. Barrington an' myself couldn't do nothin' for the laughin', till Mr. Anthony was fair wild.

"What the devil," sez he, "are yez grinnin' at, ye pair av monkeys ? Pull him off quick, or he'll be through to me leg."

So I lifts a bit of a stick, an' hits the dog two or three lundhers wid it ; but devil a bit would he let go.

"He's a terrible hoult, anyway, Mr. Anthony," sez I. "What'll I do wi' him at all, at all?"

"Bate him over the head wi' a stone," sez he.

"I'll hurt the baste," sez I, "if I do."

"I don't give a damn," sez he, "if ye kill him. Get him off anyhow," sez he.

So I ups wi' a stone an' runs over till the pair av them; an' whin the dog seen me comin' wi' the stone, he lets go Mr. Anthony's leg all av a suddint an' turns sharp on me. Mr. Anthony, he was pullin' the other way, an' whin the dog let go he went on his hands an' knees intil the sheugh, an' I took a run-race an' got up on the ditch, thinkin' I felt the baste's teeth in me leg ivery minit.

Whin I looked over my shouldher I seen Mr. Barrington had him be the chain.

"More power to ye, Mr. Barrington," sez I; "it's well ye were there, for I've no leggin's on, an' if he'd got me he'd 'a massacred me."

"He's safe enough, now, Pat," sez he, "come on down."

So I come down an' give Mr. Anthony a pull out of the sheugh.

I thought Mr. Barrington would have died laughin' at him; an' in troth it was small wondher, for he was a shockin' sight wi' gutthers an' clay. But for all that he wasn't a bit daunted.

"Ye may laugh, Archie," sez he; "but the dog didn't give a squeak anyhow. Ye're satisfied av that."

"Oh, I'm quite satisfied," sez Mr. Barrington. "I think we can depend on him. Anyway, I'll not bother thryin' him," sez he.

So we trysted to meet the nixt night at Mr. Anthony's gate, as bein' the handiest place for all parties; for it's about half-roads between me an' Ballygullion, an' just across the river on the other side av the county road an' you're in the Warren grounds. I was to bring me nets.

It was a gran' moonlight night when I left home, an' when I come to Mr. Anthony's gate the two av them was there wi' the dog.

Mr. Anthony was in great heart.

"We couldn't have picked a betther night," sez he. "We'll be able to see what we're doin'."

"Aye, an' the rabbits'll be able to see what we're doin' too," sez I. "There's no good startin' till it clouds over a bit." It was risin' a bit cloudy behind the wind, an' I knowed the moon would be soon covered.

"Maybe you're right," sez Mr. Anthony. "I'll tell you what I'll do while we're waitin'. I'll run back an' get the air-gun," sez he. "It'll make no noise, an' I might get a shot at a rabbit. Hould the dog, Archie, till I come back."

"If ye take my advice," sez I, "ye'll let the gun alone."

But he never listened to me, an' made off up the avenue at a trot, lavin' Mr. Barrington an' me standin' there.

Mr. Barrington was very heavy an' down, an' said nothin', but kept suckin' away at the pipe ; not like himself at all ; for he's mostly full av jokes an' fun, an' ready to laugh at nothin'.

"What's up between yourself an' Mr. Hastings above, Mr. Barrington," sez I, "if it's not bould av me to ask?"

"Nothin' much, Pat," sez he. "Only I spoke till him about what ye know, an' he's forbid me the house."

"The ould upstart," sez he between his teeth till himself, "because av his dirty money turnin' up his nose at a man whose gran'-father was a gintleman when his was carryin' a hod."

Ye must know the Hastings made their money in the buildin' line, an' none av them was very much before the present man.

"What need ye care," sez I, "about the ould fellow at all, at all, if the young lady an' you has made it up ?"

"Oh, it's willin' enough she'd be (the darlin' !" sez he under his breath) ; "but I'd be a nice hound to ask her to marry me on two hundhred an' fifty a year."

"Devil moan her," sez I, "if she niver gets a man wi' more. Sure I've brought up a wife an' family on the fift' av it."

Mr. Barrington he laughs a bit at that, an' just thin Mr. Anthony comes up an' stops the crack.

"The moon's well hid, now," sez he ; we'll make a start."

So we crossed the river an' took to the fields, an' afther half a mile av a walk we come to the plantin' below the big house. There's about fifteen acres av it in a sort of half-moon, then a big stretch of grass land they call the lawn, right up to the hall-door, wi' an odd big tree in it here an' there. The upper end av the plantin's fair alive wi' rabbit-holes, an' av a fine night the rabbits does be feedin' on the law in hundhreds. Our schame was to run the nest along in front of the holes, an' thin get round an' let the dog loose to scare the rabbits intil them.

As soon as we got the nets set we slipped round to the horn av the plantin', close up to the house. Mr. Anthony puts the end av the chain he had the dog on in my hand.

"Now, Pat," sez he, "you hould the dog in till we get to the middle av the lawn, an' I'll maybe get a shot," sez he, puttin' a pellet in the air-gun.

"Ye ould fool," thinks I, "wi' your pop-gun ; it's well if ye don't lame somebody."

For his hands was in such a thrimmle wi' nervousness that he could hardly snap the breech.

However, out we moves, an' just thin, as ill-luck would have it, out comes the moon.

"Bad cess to ye," sez I, "ye ould devil ye, weren't ye all right behind there, but ye must come out an' spoil sport."

But Mr. Anthony was well plazed.

"Wheesht, Pat," sez he, "I see wan."

Wi' that he puts his foot in a rabbit-hole, an' down he slaps on his face, an' the gun snaps an' pins the dog in the side somewhere.

Maybe it was more than mortal baste could stan', for thim wee pellets is cruel, but anyway the dog sets up the horridest howlin' ye iver heard, an' I was that taken in at him I dropped the chain an' let him go.

An' thin the fun began,—Mr. Anthony rippin' an' cursin' an' spittin' out bits av grass, an' the silent dog runnin' round an' round in rings an' yowlin' murther, wi' the chain rattlin' behind him like a tinker's cart.

Mr. Barrington,—devil miss him, but he'd see fun in it,—he begins to laugh.

"For a silent dog, Anthony," sez he, "he's makin' a brave noise."

"Shut up, ye fool," sez Mr. Anthony, as mad as you like, "an' catch the brute. Be the mortal," sez he, "if I catch him, I'll make a silent dog av him."

But the devil a catch him could we do ; an' the more we went near him the louder he yelled.

"We'd better run," sez I ; "the house'll be up."

But I didn't spake in time. All av a suddint the big front door opens wi' a clatter.

"Come on, men," I hears in ould Mr. Hastings's voice. "Scatther across the lawn, an' ye can't miss the blackguards."

Ye niver seen three men run faster than we did for that plantin'.

Divil a much laughin' there was in Mr. Barrington then.

"If we're caught, Pat," sez he, as he run, "I'm done entirely. I'll be disgraced for iver," sez he.

"We'll not be caught," sez I, as well as I could wi' thryin' to keep up wi' him. "Sure we've over three hundhred yards av a start. Look out for the nets !" sez I.

But wee Mr. Anthony was runnin' like a red-shank ten yards in front av us, an' niver heard me. The net just took him on the shin-bone, an' he riz about two feet in the air, an' lit on his belly on the plantin' ditch wi' a sough. Whin we got up till him he could hardly spake.

"Up wi' you, quick, Anthony," sez Mr. Barrington.

"I can't," sez he wi' a groan or two ; "me heart's bursted," sez he.

"Not a bit av it," sez Mr. Barrington, feelin' him ; "it's only your braces."

"Come on, Mr. Anthony," sez I, "you're not bate yet." But he couldn't move.

"Run yourselves, boys," sez he, in a kind av a whisper.

"Come on, sir," sez I to Mr. Barrington, "they'll be on us in a minit."

The words wasn't right out av me mouth till he catches me be the throat.

"This way, men," sez he, at the top av his voice ; "I've got wan o' the villains."

"It's not goin' to sell me, ye are, Mr. Barrington," sez I.

"Hit me a good knock wi' your fist in the face, Pat," sez he. "Quick, man!"

"Be me sowl will I," sez I, "if ye don't let go."

"I won't let go till ye do," sez he.

"Here goes thin," sez I to meself. "It's a quare business anyway, but if ye've sould me ye desarve it, an' if ye haven't, sure ye asked for it yourself ; an' wi' that I fetches him wan on the right cheek-bone would ha' felled a bullock, an' off I goes like the divil, lavin' him where he fell.

I was away safe an' well, for the moon was hid again, an' it was gey an' dark ; but I hadn't run above a hundhred yards till I come on that unfortunate divil av a dog whimperin' in the

bushes. He took till his heels whin he heard me comin' an' kep' in front av me about ten or fifteen yards ; an' if he'd been silent all his days before, be me sowl he made up for it that night, for the gowls av him was lamentable.

"The devil choke ye, anyway," sez I, when I'd run near a quarther av a mile an' him niver stopped ; "for if I'm not catched it's no fault of yours." I stopped a minit to get me wind, an' at first I thought there was nobody follyin' ; but thin I hears ould Billy the game-keeper's voice.

"This way, boys," sez he. "They're not away from us yet ; I hear their dog."

"An' devil thank ye," sez I to meself ; "sure ould Pether of the Bog could hear him, that's been stone deaf this fifteen years."

So away I goes again, wi' the dog in front av me, him yowlin' an' guldherin' harder than iver, thinkin' I was comin' to kill him fair out this time. But whin he comes to the river bank, he takes down the sthrame nixt Ballygullion.

"Good-bye, me darlin'," sez I, an' I off up the sthrame as hard as I could belt. Before I'd gone very far, I hears a sound av men runnin', an' thin a shout or two down the sthrame, an' a couple av shots, an' then nothin.' But I niver stopped till I was at home an' in me bed.

All night long I lay wondherin' what could have come on Mr. Barrington. The more I

thought about it the more it looked like some thrick, but devil a bit av me could see through it.

"Howaniver," thinks I, "I'll lie low," an' I keeps to the house for a week, lettin' on I'd a cowld ; till on market day the wife comes home from Ballygullion in a terrible flutther.

"Did ye hear about the poachin' at Mr. Hastings's, Pat?" sez she.

"Holy Pether," says I to meself, "I'm done."

"What poachin', Molly?" sez I.

"Sure," says she, "poachers broke intil Mr. Hastings's on last Tuesda' night,—above ten av thim,—to thrap his rabbits, an' Mr. Barrington, of the Bank, an' Mr. Anthony, the solicitor, follyed them to catch them an' got nearly killed. Wee Mr. Anthony's been in bed iver since, an' Mr. Barrington has a face like a prize-fighter.

"Ould Mr. Hastings's tarrible plazed about them both. They say he's promised Mr. Anthony the agency av the estate whin ould Jenkins dies, an' there's a sough in the town that Mr. Barrington's goin' to marry Miss Anne."

Thin I seen the whole thing in a wink.

"Well done yourself, Mr. Barrington," thinks I, "sure you're the able one. Thrust you to get out av a hole, if ye were up till the neck in it."

"I'll just slip down to the town, Molly," sez I, "an' hear all about it."

Whin I got intil Ballygullion I sends a message till the Bank to Mr. Barrington, askin' him if he could step down the length of the bridge to see a couple of ferrets I had,—just for a blind.

Prisintly down he comes, an' in troth I hardly knewed him.

There was a big lump av stickin'-plaster above his right eye, an' the whole cheek was all puffed up, an' as yellow as a duck's foot.

"Aye, ye ould reprobate," sez he, catchin' me look; "ye see the hand ye've made av me."

"Sure," sez I, "ye brought it on yourself. Didn't ye ask me to hit ye."

"I didn't tell ye to hit me such a skelp," sez he. "You've loosened every tooth in me head, an' I've been livin' on slops an' mashes for a week past. But niver mind, Pat," sez he, "I've had good luck out of it. There's no wan would think I got an eye like this from a friend."

"Be me sowl, Mr. Barrington," sez I, "ye're a cliver wan. Ye've bamboozled the ould gintleman finely,—wi' your ten poachers. An' is it true what they're sayin' about the young lady an' you?"

"True enough, Pat," sez he. "We're to be married within three months. The ould fellow

has behaved uncommon handsome, an' I feel a mane baste for deceivin' him. But anyhow, I tould Anne—Miss Hastings," sez he, gettin' very red where his face wasn't yellow.

"An' what did she say, Mr. Barrington?" sez I.

"Whin she'd done laughin'," sez he, "she tould me to tell ye ye'd niver want a day's shootin' in The Warren as long as she could put in a word for ye ; an' she's goin' to get the best kennel in Ireland for the dog. Have ye any notion what's become av him?"

"Divil a bit av me knows," sez I.

Wi' that I sees somethin' comin' floatin' down the river.

"Be the mortial, Mr. Barrington," sez I, whin I'd looked at it a minit. "It's him!"

"What?" sez Mr. Barrington. "What is it, Pat?" sez he.

"The dog," sez I, pointin'.

"Not a bit av it," sez he, "that's twice the size."

"Maybe he's a bit swelled," sez I ; an' whin it floated down the length av the bridge, sure enough it was himself.

Mr. Barrington stands lookin' at him till I war near turned, for in troth he was smellin' higher nor a daisy.

"Come on, Pat," sez he, at the last, turnin' away. "I'm sorry the poor baste's killed, for

he done me a good turn, an' I can't return him another wan now. But I'll send down somebody to fish him out an' give him a dacint burial."

"It's all ye can do for him, Mr. Barrington," sez I. "Rest his sowl, if he has wan, though I did lose two good rabbit-nets be him, he's a silent dog now, anyway."

It's a brave while ago since it all happened, an' Mr. Barrington an' the wife, Miss Hastings that was, is in Dublin now, in the big Bank there; but to this day there's a wee headstone in the Bank garden at Ballygullion, wi' words on it that has bothered the whole countryside but me an' Mr. Anthony:

"IN LOVING MEMORY
OF
THE SILENT DOG."

CHAPTER IV

THE WOODEN LEG

It was a black day for Michael Carlin whin he first took the notion av soldierin'. In troth, though, ye could hardly blame him ; for it was all over the two things that bothers the whole men kind av us—dhrink an' the wimmen.

Michael an' Susy Bryan was coortin' strong for a long time, an' everybody thought it would ha' been a match. An' a right good match it was for both av them. Michael lived wi' his uncle, an' was sartin to get the bit av land whin the ould man died ; an' Susy lived wi' an aunt on twenty-five acres av the best land in the county, that they said was her own, barrin' a life intherest the aunt had in it. The aunt got money left her at the same time, an' even if Michael an' Susy didn't come intil that in their own time—for the aunt was a tight, fresh body, not above thirty-eight or so—sure the childher were bound to fall in some day.

There niver should ha' been a match aisier to make, an' that's just what bate it. It was too simple and compleate altogether ; an'

wimmen bein' the devil for pure crookedness, Susy must be carryin' on wi' wan or another, just to let Michael see he wasn't goin' to get things all his own way, till he was clane wild wi' jealousy.

Wan day as Michael was goin' in to Ballygullion fair, he happened to come on James Doran and Susy walkin' along the road.

They were brave an' close together for a start, an' whin Susy sees Michael comin', she slithers still closer to James. James, bein' a man av spunk, didn't make much av a move away as ye may guess ; so altogether they were a very lovin' lookin' couple whin Michael come near them.

Michael he never let on, though, but just said, "Good-mornin'," and walked by. He niver turned his head either, or Susy niver catched him doin' it anyway, an' she turned hers brave an' often to see.

But for all that Michael took it quiet, he was badly cut ; an' all that day he kept thinkin' about it, an' drinkin' half-wans av whiskey to dhrive the thoughts out av his head.

The more he took the angrier he got with Susy, till, bein' clane beside himself wi' whiskey an' jealousy, an' happenin' to meet the Ulster Fusiliers route-marchin' on his way home, what does he do but list. The sodgers were campin' outside av Ballygullion for two days, an' at the end av that time Michael was to join them.

But when Michael got home, thin there was the fun. The ould uncle nearly wint mad. It was bad enough losin' Michael about the place, but that was nothin' to the disgrace av him goin' for a sodger.

There was a muttherin' av war wi' the Boers at the time, and terrible bad feelin' again England among the red-hot Nationalists ; an' to list for a sodger in the British army was like turnin' your back on your politics altogether.

So ould Pether he ramped up an' down, an' cursed somethin' dhreadful, an' poor Michael sat on the dhresser very miserable lookin' ; for the dhrink was dead in him be this time, an' he begin to see he'd made a fool av himself.

But if Michael's uncle was mad, it was nothin' to the rage Susy was in whin she heard av it. Susy was by way av bein' a terrible pathriot, an' used to dress herself up av a holiday wi' a wee green hood an' a cloak wi' shamrocks embroidhered on it, for all the world like what you'd see on a Christmas card. An' mortal well she looked too, wi' a handful of brown curls stickin' out on each side av as red a pair av cheeks, and two as bright eyes as was in Ireland.

'Twas well the green suited her though ; for, in troth if she'd ha' looked as well in it, there's no tellin' but she'd ha' wore orange.

Anyhow, she was clane wild wi' Michael, an' wouldn't even see him, though he hung about

the house the whole two days. If she hadn't been a bit in the wrong herself, she'd maybe have come round ; but that was what finished his chance entirely.

The end av it was Michael marched away wan mornin' wi' devil a wan to say "good-bye" till him, an' wasn't heard av for more than a year.

Thin word come that he was goin' out to South Africa wi' a lot more recruits to bring up the regiment to full strength ; for they'd lost heavy again the Boers. For near a year again there was no word more. An' thin a letter come for the uncle sayin' Michael had been badly wounded an' was comin' home.

For all the uncle was so mad about the soldierin' he was a kindly man at bottom, an' he made Michael welcome ; though he was no manner av use till him, for wan of his legs was as stiff as a poker wi' the wound he'd got.

Wan evenin' after Michael had been home about a couple av days, I thought I'd go down an' see him. Whin I wint in he was sittin' before the fire wi' the game leg up on a chair before him, an' the uncle sittin' beside him talkin' very hard.

"How are ye, Michael ?" sez I. "But I needn't ask. Sure you're lookin' rightly." An' so he was too, barrin' the leg. The soldierin' had made a man av him. He was square an'

well set up lookin' about the shouldhers, an' as brown as a berry.

"Troth, Pat," sez he, "I've not much to boast about. I'm little betther than a cripple. An' if the uncle here hadn't taken me in, it's the beggin' I might be at."

"Wheesht now," sez the uncle, shufflin' on his chair—he was a terrible fidgety wee man, always on the go—"sure you're welcome; an' if you take my advice," sez he, "you'll be undher a compliment to nobody very long. Not that I want to be redd av ye; but it's for your own good."

"I'll tell ye what it is, Pat," goes on the uncle, turnin' to me; "I'm just advisin' him to make up to the widow beyont."

It was on me tongue to ask Michael what about Susy, when the ould chap winks at me.

"Now that Susy's left her, an' not likely to be back, she'll jump at the chance av settlin' again," sez he.

"An' is Susy not comin' back from her uncle Joe's?" sez I.

"No," sez he, "she's goin' to marry her cousin, and they're both to keep house wi' the ould man. He's terribly lonely since the wife died."

I stole a look at Michael, an' he was lookin' very white.

"Look here, uncle," sez he, breakin' out

suddenly, "I'm a burden here, an' if the widow would have me I'd ask her, for I'm not carin' much who I marry ; but there's no wan would have a poor cripple like me, an' well ye know it. Help me up to bed," sez he, "an' let Pat know the whole story. He'll not tell anybody about me that he's known from a child. If he gives in to me makin' up till any woman, when he's heard, damme, I'll marry who you like."

So the ould fellow arms him up to bed, an' comes back to the fire. "Look here, Pat," sez he, "the whole trouble's this. The lad has lost his leg above the knee, an' has got a wooden wan. Ye wouldn't notice it when he's sittin', but he can't walk barrin' on sticks yet, an' very stiff at that. That's why I tould him the crack about Susy an' the cousin. There's no chance of a young girl lookin' at him now."

"But it's different wi' the widow. Whin a widow woman gets to her time av life, an' no word av a second market, there's very little in breeches she'll not face. It's not for a lame leg she'd refuse a likely young chap like Michael."

"Would ye not tell her 'twas a wooden wan, thin ?" sez I.

"Devil a bit," sez he, "if I have me will. She'll niver find out till it's too late, an' thin she'll have to thole. There's enough av Michael left to make as good a man as she's likely to get now, an' if he wanst gets her he's

a made man. The ould hussy has bings av money, I'm tould. An' if Susy should marry the cousin, an' there is some talk av it, right enough, the aunt'll be able to buy out the place very chape. She has a life intherest in it as it is.

"The only bother wi' Michael is the leg. If him an' the widow was wanst married she'd niver tell, or if it come out she could let on she knew all the time. But if she finds out about it durin' the coortin' she'll not hould her tongue thin, an' the divil a woman he'll get at all."

"Pether," sez I, "it's well ye tould me about the leg ; for I know the very article for you."

"What, Pat," sez he ; "what do ye mane?"

"It's just this mornin'," sez I, "I was readin' in a piece av a doctor's paper the vet brought round a liniment for the mare, about some man in Dublin that makes legs betther than the rale thing,—that's if you're to believe what he sez in the advertisement."

"But could ye walk in wan ?" sez Pether.

"Walk," sez I. "If the man's not as big a liar as the ould fellow himself, ye could dance a hornpipe in wan. It'll carry him up the church wi' the widow anyway," sez I, "an' that's all ye want."

"Pat," sez he, "bring down the paper, an' if they're all you say, we'll have wan for the boy

should it break me. It'll not throuble him to pay me back if he gets the widow."

The end av it was ould Pether brings Michael round to let him send for a patent leg. An' though the price daunted him a bit, he was that sure av Michael gettin' the widow he screwed himself up to partin' wi' it.

It was no easy job gettin' Michael to agree, for he was no way keen on the widow, an' the game leg was a fine excuse. But whin he seen how the uncle was set on the match, what could he do but give in, him bein' only a sort av pensioner in the house.

"Pat," sez he to me, whin the uncle wasn't by, "I've lost Susy now, an' I can't sponge here all me days. There's nothin' for it but the widow, an' I might do worse. She's a kindly wee woman, an' an ould friend av mine. But I don't like decavin' her about the leg."

"Hould on till ye get the new wan," sez I. "If it's like the thing at all, ye needn't say a word. Niver mind about the decavin'. Sure all marryin' is decavin'. If she'd knowed the temper the first wan had, she'd niver ha' taken him. An' a bad temper's worse than a bad leg any day."

"Ay, but I'm not sure it's worse than a wooden wan," sez Michael, wi' the first smile I'd seen on his face since he come home.

Before the new leg come, Pether had

widow over for tay, an' I think he must have give her a hint that Michael was on the look out, for she was over near ivery day after that inquirin' for his health ; an' all the time she kept askin' about the bad leg, an' how soon he'd be walkin'. Michael niver would say much about it, but left ould Pether to do the talkin'. I was over wan night she was there, an' it was as good as a play to see Pether squirmin' on his chair, an' lyin' like the devil.

An' in tioth I think the joke av it egged Michael on a bit ; for he was mighty friendly wi' the widow before the night was over.

A couple av days afther this Pether sends up for me, an' whin I got there he runs across the kitchen an' shakes me be the hand.

"Pat," sez he, "you've made the boy's fortune. Look at him," sez he, caperin' round. "Get up an' walk, Michael."

Up gets Michael, an' walks across the kitchen, an' faith 'twas wonderful. Barrin' a bit av a halt, you'd niver ha' known but he had two legs as sound as me own. He was greatly up wi' it himself too.

"Would any wan know, Pat ?" sez he.

"Not a mother's son," sez I. "I can hardly believe it meself. It's wondherful altogether. Does it work aisy ?"

"There's a bit av a catch in it I was just

goin' to fix whin you come in," sez Pether.
"Sit down, Michael, an' I'll do it now."

"Maybe you'd as well lave it alone," sez Michael; for he knowed his uncle.

He was by way of bein' a handy man, an' always would be meddlin' at things he didn't undherstand. There was hardly a clock in the countryside he didn't spoil before the people found him out.

But Pether wasn't to be put off.

"Not at all," sez he; "I'll make it all right in a jiffey."

So he gets Michael down on a chair at the fire, pullis up his breeches, an' begins pokin' about the knee av the patent leg with a screw-driver. There was a desperate lot av springs an' joints about the thing, an' I misdoubted but Pether would do it little good. An' sure enough, afther pokin' a bit, whin he thries to work the joint,—"be the holy poker," sez he, "she' stuck."

An' stuck the leg was. It was bent well at the knee, but divil a bit would it go straight for all he could do, an' he tugged at it till he near pulled Michael off the chair.

"What's to be done?" sez he, afther he'd progged it for five minits. "I'm clane bate."

"Thry a taste av oil," sez I.

"The very thing, Pat," sez he; an' he reaches down a bottle av paraffin.

He put a dhrop or two in. "Now," sez he, "for a good pull. That'll shift it."

So it did. The leg straightened out wi' a snap, lit ould Pether on his back, an' the toe av it just took the wee tay-drawer that was simmerin' on the hob.

The cat an' dog was sleepin' in front av the fire; an' nayther of them had any cause to complain av the other; for they just got the tay over them in about equal shares. The dog run away up the house yelpin' murdher, an' the cat tears round the kitchen a couple av times, spittin' an' swearin', knocks two plates off the dhresser, an' thin out through a pane av glass.

"Holy Biddy," sez Pether, risin' to his feet; "there's eighteenpence gone. But niver mind, the leg's workin' again. Is it aisy, Michael?"

"It's all right, uncle," sez Michael, walkin' up an' down the kitchen.

"I'll just put a dhrop more oil in it," sez Pether.

"No, uncle," sez Michael very firm. "Thank you, all the same, we'll just let it rest at this."

"Maybe you're right," sez Pether. "It might take another throw. Man!" sez he, "its doin' well. I'll dhrop over to the widow's in the mornin' an' tell her you're mendin' fast."

Whin the widow seen Michael walkin' about wi' only a bit av a limp, she begin to set her cap at him in rale earnest. Up till then she'd

beenafeared he was goin' to be a lamitor all his days, an' she wasn't right sure whether to face him or not. Besides, there was a pig-dealer in the neighbourhood, wan Tammas M'Gimpsey, was reported to be lookin' after her when the word av Susy's goin' to be married come out. But afther Michael got on his feet she had no eyes for anybody but him.

About three weeks after the patent leg come home, Pether calls up to see me.

"Pat," sez he, "the job's as good as done. Michael's a made man. He's goin' to ask the widow after Mass next Sunday."

"It's well if Susy doesn't come home before it's settled," sez I.

"Tut," sez Pether, "she'd niver look at him now."

"Ay, but she might put him off the notion av the widow," sez I.

"Not a bit," sez Pether. "Sure the widow an' him's as good as trysted already. Michael has a terrible notion av her now."

I said nothin' to that, but I had an idea all the same that Michael's notion av her was little sthronger than at the first. He wasn't lookin' in big heart for a man that was goin' to be married, if it was only to a widow.

Sunday come, an' whin I sat down beside Michael an' the uncle, there was the widow right across the aisle, dhressed up to the nines.

A minit or so before the bell stopped, ould Pether give a jump an' sits well forrad in his sate. I seen him skellyin' across, an' whin I looked, who should I see but Susy sittin' down beside her aunt. From the look the widow gave her I'm thinkin' she was nayther expected nor welcome.

"Pether, me man," sez I to meself, "your work's cut out for you now."

"An' Pether knowed that as well as me ; for he aye kept edgin' furdher forrad to keep Michael from seein' Susy. Very little throuble he had ; for Michael niver turned his head at all, but sat there very glum, lookin' straight in front av him.

All wint well till Father Connolly was just beginnin' his sermon. Michael shifted round a bit to hear him, an' his eyes lights on Susy. He half riz from his sate, an' turned as white as a sheet. Sittin' down again his wooden leg slips off the wee stool he had it restin' on, an' hits the flure a brave knock. Wi' that it gives a whirr an' a bizz the same as in the kitchen at home, an' fetches the sate before us a thump ye'd have heard all over the chapel.

Ould Mrs. Malone in front lepped above three inches in the air, an' dhropped her glasses, an' Father Connolly took a mortial hard look our way.

But sure lookin' at Michael was little use, for

the leg was clane away wi' it, kickin' fourteen to the dozen, an' threatenin' ivery minit to brake down the partition in front.

Ivery man, woman an' child in the church was standin' up, or cranin' over to see what was wrong, an' as for Father Connolly, he was near chokin' wi' the rage. The cowld sweat was runnin' down Michael's face, an' poor ould Pether was near as bad.

"Stop the cursed thing, Michael, for Hivin's sake," sez he, in as near a whisper as he could get to bate the noise av the leg.

"I can't," sez Michael in desperation. "Thry an' catch, it, uncle."

So Pether stoops to get hould av it; but he missed his grip, an' the leg comes again the partition wi' a dunt that split the board for two feet.

Be this time the people was near mad wi' curiosity, an' Father Connolly had stopped in his sermon, an' was comin' down from the pulpit.

"Let me out," says Michael, sthrugglin' to his feet; an' out he comes, wi' the leg goin' like a flail.

The first skite it kicked ould Pether's Sunday tall hat into the organ-loft. Be good luck the nixt missed Pether himself by an inch; but if it did, the third one took me on the knee-cap, an' near desthroyed me.

However, out in the aisle he gets at last, an' just that minit Father Connolly comes marchin' down it, wi' a face like a turkey-cock.

Whin Michael seen him comin' he jams the toe av the leg undher the heatin' stove, an' steadies himself as well as he could.

"An' is it you, Michael Carlin, that has been disturbin' the house av God wi' your dhrunken frolics?" sez Father Connolly. "I might have known it. I might have known it could be none av the dacint boys av Ballygullion; but a blackguard av a soldier, that fears nayther God nor man. Lave the sacred precincts av the church, before I forget my duty as a priest," sez he, turnin' away.

But sure enough the Ould Fellow himself was again Michael that day, for just as he dhrew the toe out to go, the leg lashes forrad an' catches Father Connolly where he didn't expect it.

Before ye could dhraw your breath the half av the congregation was on top av Michael, Tammas M'Gimpsey at the head av thim.

"Out wi' him," sez he, "out wi' the dirty sodger, an' tache him whether he'll kick our priest in his own church!" "Out wi' him," sez everybody.

An' out they goes in a shtugglin' crowd, Michael in the middle av thim, an' the wimmen hanging round, pullin' the skirts av men's coats, an' cryin' melia murdher.

Poor Michael would ha' had a poor chance wi' them be himself, but they didn't reckon on the leg. If it did get Michael intil the throuble, manly and well it stood to him in it.

Between the middle av the church an' the door it shifted more teeth than Docthor Cargill pulled in a year before ; an' thim that only got a peeled shin or a black eye was well plazed the next day.

Be the time they got him intil the church-yard the bulk av them was at Michael's head, an' only Tammas M'Gimpsey would face the right leg—the wooden wan, I mane ;—though sorrow a wan av thim knew it was wood, thin.

"Throw him in the road !" sez the men at his head.

"Put him in the river," sez thim at his feet. They were the angriest at him, small wondher.

"Ye'll dhrown him," sez the first party, pullin' nixt the road.

"Divil a odds, if we do," sez Tammas M'Gimpsey, pullin' nixt the river.

At that minit the sstraps av the leg give way.

Down goes the men at Michael's head over Father Dorrian's tombstone, an' down goes Tammas M'Gimpsey wi' the leg in his hand. Whin he riz, he takes a look at Michael an' the boys lyin' on the ground in a heap, an' wan at the boot an' leg in his hand. An' thin wi' a screech like a stuck pig he over the churchyard

wall, an' across the fields like a madman. He had his passage booked for Amerikay the nixt day, before he heard the leg was wood.

For the first minit or two the rest av the boys was near as much scared as Tammas ; but they soon seen how the thing was ; an' thin there was such a laugh riz as Ballygullion niver heard. Even thim that had broken heads an' bloody noses joined in--afther a while.

The wimmen that was hurryin' out to save Michael's life, they chimed in too, an' the only sober face I seen was the widow's. She had come out hot-foot to rescue Michael, an' near thrapped over Tammas M'Gimpsey an' the leg as they both wint down.

Wan look at the leg an' another at Michael was enough for her. She stood a minit or two dumbfoundhered, an' thin down the path for the gate.

An' if the crowd laughed before, they laughed twice as much thin ; for there was few didn't know about the coortin' match.

But och, och, ye would ha' been sorry for poor Michael, sittin' there in the middle av the ring av thim, the laughin'-stock av the parish. An' maybe the thought that Susy was among them wasn't the laste av his sorrow.

In the thick av the laughin' an' jeerin' out comes Father Connolly ; for somebody had tould him what had happened.

" Michael," sez he, puttin' his hand on his head, " Michael, me poor fellow, I miscalled ye inside. I said things to ye I shouldn't ha' said, an' things I didn't mane. But ye'll forgive me, me son, for I was angrier than a Christian man should be, let alone a priest, an' I didn't know your thrial. But keep up your heart," sez he; " it's not the coward that gets the knocks, an' a brave man, Michael, has no cause to be ashamed av anything. God comfort ye, Michael," sez the ould man, turnin' away.

" An now, boys and girls," sez he to the rest av thim standin' round, " go in there," pointin' to the church, " an' I'll see if I can't tache ye more Christian charity than to laugh at a fellow-creature's affliction. It's little betther than haythens ye are."

It wasn't long till they were all in again, I can tell ye; all but me an' Pether.

" Uncle," sez Michael, " lift me up on the stone there, an' do you an' Pat lave me for a bit. Maybe you'd borrow Joe Crawley's cart from down the road an' take me home. I'm only lumber, an' the world knows it now. I've thried to decave people, an' I'm punished for it this day."

" We'll go, Michael," sez ould Pether. " Pat," sez he to me in a whisper, " stay here an' keep an eye on the lad."

So I tip-toes round behind Michael's back,

an' plants meself on a stone a bit away, lavin' Michael sittin' there wi' his head between his hands.

Prisintly, who should comin' slippin' out av the porch but Susy. She comes right over to Michael, an' puts her hand on his shouldher.

"Michael," sez she. Quick enough he looked up thin.

"Susy," sez he ; "Susy, me dear, is it you ?" Maybe 'twas the words, maybe 'twas the way he said thim, but Susy's face that was glum enough before broke out in a smile like sunshine on a runnin' sthrame.

"Och, Susy," sez poor Michael, "don't you laugh at me, too. I know I'm a mock an' a laughin'-stock,—well, well, I know it ; but if ye iver had a kindly thought for me, an' wanst I believe ye had, lave me to me shame, if ye can't pity me. If I did go soldierin' have I not paid the price ? Och, och," sez he, dicroppin' his head on his hands again, "if I'd only lost me life be it. But I've lost dearer than me life, an' it's this day I know it."

"In troth, Michael," sez Susy, "ye've lost me aunt right enough, if that's what ye mane. She'll niver take ye now."

"Ye little devil ye," sez I to myself, "if I didn't see your face I'd think ye'd no heart, to say them words."

But Michael didn't see her face, an' his head dhropped lower than iver.

"I desarve it, Susy," sez he; "it's a hard word you're sayin', but God knows I desarve it. But me dear," sez he, "some day if ye should happen to think av a broken man, a man that was a burden to his friends, an' them friends eggin' him on, ye'll maybe see some excuse for him. For all that, till I heard ye were to be married to your cousin, I niver give in. Not that I had hopes for meself. But sure till you were another man's wife, I could think av ye without sin."

"Well, Michael," sez Susy—the smile was still on her face, but I thought there was a glint av tears in her eye—"I'm not goin' to marry me cousin that I know av, an' if me aunt won't have ye,—and I don't think there's much chance av it,—I'll just have to take ye meself—if you'll ask me, that is," sez she, gettin' very red.

"Susy," sez Michael, sittin' up, "are ye mockin' me?" "No," sez he, lookin' at her a minit; "God bless your soft heart, I believe you'd do it for pity; but, child, ye don't know what you're sayin'. Is it to marry me, a cripple, an' a pauper forbye? Niver," sez he. "I've behaved like a scoundhrel, but plaze God I'll be an honest man now. I'll love ye, Susy, till they carry out this maimed carcase av mine, but I'll niver let ye join yourself to

three-quarthers av a man. God bless ye again, dear," sez he, wringin' her hand, "an' send ye the man ye desarve."

"Well, Michael," sez Susy, "I don't know what about gettin' the man I desarve, but it seems I'm not goin' to get the man I want; an' all because he's too fond av me, that's the annoyin' part av it. I didn't say what I said out av pity, though me heart's sore for your throuble, but just because I couldn't help it. I lost ye be me folly an' empty head before, an' if I'm only gettin' three-quarthers av ye back I've nobody to blame but meself. An' I'd rather have that three-quarthers av a man, Michael dear, than the best whole man in Ireland."

An' thin in a minit Susy was lyin' on his breast cryin' an' croonin' over her poor boy, an' Michael strokin' her hair and sayin' niver a word. Maybe his heart was too full to spake.

It was no place for me, anyway, so I stepped quietly out be the gate.

Comin' up the road I meets ould Pether wi' the horse an' cart.

"Pat," sez he, "maybe this is all for the best. Ould Crawley was executor under the uncle's will, an' he tells me the farm's Susy's altogether. The aunt only got two hundhred pound an' no life intherest. So maybe Michael's well out av her, afther all."

"What?" sez I, "the farm's Susy's? Come here, Pether," an' I dhraws him over to the churchyard gate. "Look at thim," sez I. "Wheesht now, ye ould fool. Lave thim there for a while, an' thin put thim in the cart an' let thim go home together. You an' I'll walk it. Bnt if it wasn't that Susy's not far off bein' an angel, I'd say Michael had the devil's own luck."

I don't well know how it come about, but whin Tammas M'Gimpsey got the notion av Amerikay in his head, he stuck till it, an' whin he wint, he tuk the widow an' the two hundhred wi' him.

A fortnight afther that Susy and Michael was married; an' now there's a lump of a gossoon runnin' about the place that thinks his daddy's the cliverest man in the country because he can stick a fork in his right leg.

The wee fellow thinks all the more av it since he thried it on himself.

CHAPTER V

THE ALARM CLOCK

'Twas just in the middle av Ballygullion sthreet I met Billy av the Hills, the last man in life I thought to meet there on a market-day. In his spare time Billy does be makin' an odd dhrop av potheen ; an' the market-day bein' a throng day for the polis in Ballygullion, 'twas ginerally Billy's throng day outside av it, deliverin' a wee keg here an' there.

" You're a sight for sore eyes, Billy," sez I.
" What has fetched ye intil the town the day ? "

" Ye know ould Dick Taafe, me uncle be marriage," sez Billy. " His brother's dead, away in Donegal, an' he's goin' off to the funeral in the mornin'. I'm sleepin' in the house a night or two to keep the aunt company, an' I come in the day to rise me uncle in good time for the thrain ; for he's desperate heavy-headed, and the aunt's little betther, though she wouldn't give in till it. Come on down an' have a crack before ye go home."

So away we goes down to the house, an' whin we got that length, who should be there wi'

Mrs. Taafe but wee Jinks, the pedlar,—Peddlin' Tam as they call him,—wi' a whole packful av stuff spread out on the table.

"Good-evenin', gintlemen," sez he. "Ye might come an' give me a hand. I'm just thryin' to sell the mistress here the very thing she wants."

"What's that?" sez Billy. "It'll be some-thin' in the way av clothes, I'm thinkin'."

"Not a bit av it," sez the pedlar, "it's just an alarm clock. Sure her heart's broke wi' wakin' the man in the mornin's; an' this is the boy'll do it for her."

"I don't believe in thim conthrivances," sez she; "ye could niver depend on them."

"Hould on till I show ye how she works," sez Tam, "an' then ye'll change your mind. She's set for five," sez he; "now listen till her ringin', for it's herself can do it."

"Ay, there ye are now," sez the aunt. "Sure it's seven o'clock now, an' she'd be ringin' two hours slow. That'd be a dale av use in the mornin'."

"But ye can set her for any time ye like," sez Tam. "Wait a minit an' I'll set her to seven."

"An' mightn't ye as well get up to raise the house as get up to set the clock to do it," sez she. "It bates me to see the use av it at all."

I wish ye'd seen the pedlar's face. 'Twas

little compliment to the ould woman's brains
was in the back av his head, I'm thinkin'.

But he wasn't to be bate, an' at long an' at
last he got the workin' av the clock insensed
intil her.

"Now," sez he, "listen till her ;" an' he set
the clock down on the table.

The devil a such a whirroo ye iver heard in
your life. The first birr-r she made she near
lifted herself off the table ; an' then she hopped
an' jigged round it, fair burstin' herself wi'
noise, for all the world like a hen after
layin'.

"What d'ye think av that ?" sez the pedlar,
whin she stopped. "An' if ye set her on a tin
pan she'll make double the noise."

"Ye don't need it," sez Billy ; "she's a
terror. Be the hokey, if ye set her on a tomb-
stone in Ballybreen churchyard there'd be a
general resurrection."

"An' what do you think av her, mem ?"
sez the pedlar, turnin' to Billy's aunt.

"How much do ye want for her ?" sez she,
feelin' for her purse.

"Half-a-crown," sez he, seein' how keen she
was lookin'.

But the ould woman wasn't that soft, for all
ye could see she was dyin' for the clock.

"I'll give ye two shillin's," sez she, "take it
or lave it."

"Well, well," sez the pedlar, "seein' it's you, Mrs. Taafe, ye can have her."

"Don't let on what I paid for her, Billy," sez she when the pedlar was gone. "The good man'd have me life if he knewed."

She wasn't far wrong there, for the ould fellow was heart miserable about money.

"Wait till he hears her," sez Billy, "an' he'd not grudge half-a-crown. I'll tell ye what," sez he; "just slip her into the room the night, an' niver say a word, an' then he'll know the good av her before he hears the price."

"It's a right good idea," sez she, "an' I'll just thry it."

"You're a terrible blackguard, Billy," sez I, when the ould woman was left the room. "It'll frighten the ould fellow out av his seven senses."

"Divil a bit," sez Billy. "I niver seen him frightened but wanst, an' that was whin he dhropped a shillin' in the pig-market, an' thought he wasn't goin' to find it. But, Lord," sez he, "but I'll make him lepp. He'll think it's the Fenians. I'll fill him full av stories about dinnamite an' infernal machines before he goes to bed."

"Here he's comin' up the sthreet wi' Davis the polisman," sez I.

"Is it Davis?" sez Billy. "Begad I'll spoil his dhrames for him too. 'Twould be a charity, for he's as timid as a chicken. Look at him wi'

the fat white face av him. He's big enough to be a man, if he'd only the heart av wan."

"Good evenin', uncle. Good evenin', constable," sez Billy, as they come up.

"Good evenin', Billy," sez the uncle, hearty enough. But the constable was very dhry an' cool. None av the polis was very fond av Billy. He was too many for them ; an' nobody likes to be got the betther av, laste av all a polisman. It's more av a come-down for him than for another body.

"It's a wondher you're not out at Ballybreen, constable," sez Billy.

"What'd I be out there for ?" sez the constable very short.

"Did ye not hear about it ?" sez Billy. "Man, there's the devil himself to pay. Nayther Bates nor Keown'll sell their estates, an' the whole countrhy's in a blaze about it ; for every other landlord in the county has sould, an' brave an' chape too. They're goin' to start a Land League, an' clear the countrhy av landlords altogether, they say. There hasn't been as bitther feelin' in the countrhy since I was a lump av a boy runnin' about. I wouldn't be surprised if ye were to see the ould Fenian work over again, wi' shootin' av landlords, an' dinnamittin' av houses,—an' polis-barracks, too," sez Billy, takin' a skelly at him wi' the tail av his eye.

"What'd they touch the polis-barracks for, Billy?" sez I, just to give him a lift. "They'll niver come near Ballygullion, anyway."

"Will they not?" sez Billy. "Doesn't half the town belong to ould Keown? Sure the house me uncle's livin' in is his. An' the people is terrible wicked agin the polis, I hear. Ould Bates has wired to Dublin for fifty av thim, and the countrry's set for givin' them a warm welcome. 'Twould be odd if they didn't give the polis in Ballygullion a touch too."

"Ye seem to know a good dale about this affair," sez the constable, very suspicious. "Maybe you're a sympathizer?"

"'Deed no," sez Billy, "except that I'd like to see the polis get a lick. Not, av coarse," sez he, very hasty be the way, "that I'd like to see anythin' happen to our own polis here, Misther Davis, for, faith, they're harmless enough. An' troth, it's a pity av them all. It's a terrible hard life, too, whin ye come to think av it; wi' everybody wi' a grudge agin ye, an' niver knowin' whin ye'll be blown intil eternuty."

"I'll tell what it is, me fine fellow," sez the constable, "ye'd betther mind yourself. If ye get mixed up in any Fenian work ye'll see whether the polis here is harmless or not. I've a good mind to lift ye on suspicion as it is, an' I'd do it too, if I thought there was any

truth in what you've been sayin'. But ye're twinty years behind the time wi' your dinnamite. Dinnamite!" sez the constable, wi' a sneer, movin' off, "dinnamite nowadays!"

For all that he footed it off to the barracks a very sober-lookin' polisman ; an' whin ould Pether Linchey's donkey let a hee-haw just as he passed the stable, he give a lepp in the air that near bounced the helmet off his head.

"What nonsense is that ye've been fillin' the man's head wi'," sez ould Taafe. "Some more av your jokes, I suppose, Billy. But ye needn't be thryin' them on here. It'll maybe do for a yarn for the constable, but it's no manner av use for me. I know ye too well now. Good-night, Pat," sez he, goin' past us intil the house.

"The ould chap's too cute," sez Billy, lookin' a bit gunked ; "but, anyway, he'll get a bit av a start in the mornin'."

"Is it all lies about the throuble out at Bally-breen ?" sez I.

"Not *all*," sez Billy, wi' a grin. "There's a bit av bad blood right enough, an' the head-constable an' two av the polis is away out just to show themselves ; 'twas that put it in me head. But, 'deed, the most av it is nayther more nor less than just lies."

"Well, good-night, Billy," sez I. "Ye'll be hanged for some av your jokes, but it'll not be for this wan. It's mortal like a miss."

"Is it?" sez he. "You lave the clock an' me till it, an' there'll maybe a laugh outav ity it."

An' troth so there was, an' if ye don't laugh too, it's because I can't tell the story as well as Billy.—But here goes for it, anyway:

About nine o'clock or so ould Taafe gathers himself together to go upstairs to bed.

"Ye'll give me a bit av a call about six, Billy," sez he, "if I should sleep in. Not that I'll likely need it."

"No, ye'll hardly," sez Billy. "Me aunt tells me you're a grand riser. Ye'll need no call from me the morrow mornin', I'm sure," wi' a wink at the aunt.

Away the ould fellow goes, an' Billy an' the aunt sits crackin' at the fire till they thought he'd be sure to be asleep.

"I'm thinkin'," sez Billy, as she riz to go, "ye'd betther let me slip up wi' the clock afther ye're in."

"Twould be betther," sez the aunt. "Give me two or three minits to get me clothes off."

Whin Billy thought she'd be settled, he slips off his boots, an' up the stairs, an' just sets the clock inside the door.

Thin he pushes the door till, an' listens for a minit. 'Twas like a watchmaker's shop, as he said afterwards.

The ould wag-at-the-wall was goin' "tack-tack, tack-tack," very slow an' steady, an' the

wee alarm was rattlin' away " tick-tick-tick-tick ;"—for all the world like long Tammas M'Gorria an' the wee wife goin' down the road av a frosty night.

" It'll wake him, sure," sez Billy to himself. An' whether it was the tickin', or the creakin' Billy made on the stairs, I don't know, but anyway ould Taafe sits up sudden in the bed.

" What's that ?" sez he, very sharp.

No answer at all but the tickin' av the two clocks.

" Jenny," sez he, nudgin' the wife, " Jenny ; wake up, there's somethin' in the room. Do ye hear it ?"

" No," sez the wife, very sleepy be the way, " I hear nothin'. Go to sleep, ye ould fool ; ye've been dreamin'. 'Twas thim salt herrins ye had for your supper. Ye've got the nightmare."

" I've got the devil!" sez he very mad. " I tell ye there's somethin' in the room. This is some av Billy's conthrivances. He'll set fire to the bed, or some mad action av the kind. Billy!" he shouts at the top av his voice.

" Wheesht, wheesht, man," sez the wife. " If ye must know, it's a 'larmer clock I got to rise ye in the mornin'."

" A 'larmer clock," sez he, " who give it to ye ?"

" Niver mind," sez she, " who give it to me ?"

"Where did ye get the clock?" sez he.
"Ye'd betther tell me. Ye'll not sleep the
night till ye do."

"I got it from Peddlin' Tam," sez she, "if
ye want to know. An' if ye'd like to know
more,"—for she was gettin' a bit vexed by this
time—"I paid two shillin's for it. Now are ye
satisfied?"

"Two shillin's," sez he, "for a 'larmer
clock; two cowld shillin's to that wee thief.
Oh! Holy Biddy, but I married the right
gomeril. Is it the workhouse ye'd bring us
to? Two shillin's——An' what the divil did
ye want wi' a 'larmer clock anyway? Did I
iver sleep in yit whin I wanted to get up, tell
me that, ye"—

"Don't miscall me, Dick Taafe," breaks in
the wife. "An' don't sin your sowl wi' lies
either. Did ye iver sleep in? Didn't ye sleep
in last fair day an' miss the sale av the heifer?
Didn't ye sleep in the mornin' the pig was to
be killed, an' wasn't able to get him killed till
ten days aftherwards, whin he'd ate five shillin's
worth more of potaties an' male, an' pork was
down eighteenpence? Didn't ye sleep in—ay,
didn't ye sleep in the mornin' we were married,
and had to be fetched to the chapel wi' your
boots not tied?"

"Ay, an' 'twas an ill turn the man did that
wakened me that day," sez he; "to get me

tied to an empty-headed cabbage av a woman that's ruinin' me wi' her capers an' nonsense. Get out av the bed an' put that clock outside the door ; an' the morrow you'll go an' get them two shillin's back from that wee peddlin' vagabond, or, be the mortal, I'll be hung for him. Out wi' ye," sez he wi' a roar.

An' out the poor woman had to get, an' put the clock on the stairhead, all the time Billy lyin' low half-way down the stairs.

Another man would ha' been satisfied an' gone till his bed ; but it wouldn't ha' been Billy if he'd let well alone.

There he sits on the stairs till all was quiet wanst more, an' thin puts the clock in again ; an' shovin' her well in behind the table he makes a bit av a noise.

The uncle stirs in his sleep, an' thin sits up again in bed.

"Ye ould faggot, ye," sez he ; "ye've brought her back again. Do ye want me to murdher ye ? Get up this minit, an' put that clock down in the room below."

"She is out," sez the wife. "I put her on the stairs."

"She's not out," sez he ; "I hear her in the room. Will ye get up an' put her out whin I tell ye ?"

"No!" sez she, as mad as a hatter ; "I'll not put her out whin she's not in. If ye want to

make a fool av yourself get up an' look whether she's in the room or not."

"Wait till I get me hands on her," sez he, "an' be hivins I'll alarm her," an' out he bounces. "Where's the matches?"

"Look for thim," sez she, "whin you're so smart."

Billy could hear the uncle pattherin' about on the flure, an' gropin' round for the matches. Thin there was a clatter, an' a blissin' from the ould man.

"Blast your big feet, couldn't ye put your boots undher the bed," sez he, leppin' round. "I've sprained me big toe. Where's thim matches, this minit?"

"Ye may sprain your neck for me," sez she from the bed, "before I'll tell ye, ye obstinate ould mule."

Wi' that there was another clatter, an' a roar from the ould man. "Oh, 'tarnal wars, me shin-bone's broke."

"I wondher would ye come to your bed," sez the wife. "Ye'll kill yourself."

"I will whin I get this blasted clock," sez he, "an' ye'll be sorry whin I do. I have her too!" sez he ; for he heard her tickin' at his feet.

But he hadn't reckoned on the table ; an' as he stooped down he near brained himself on the corner av it.

An' thin he wint clane wild. First he made

a glam at the table, an' pulled off the cloth, wi' two or three bottles, and a pair of chaney dogs. Thin down wint the lookin' glass, an' the next charge over goes the table itself. An' ivery clatter there was a guldher av an oath from him, an' a screech from her in the bed.

"Billy, Billy," shouts the aunt, "for gracious' sake come up; your uncle's wreckin' the house," an' she gives a screech fit to raise the roof.

Wi' that there comes a knockin' on the front door, an' Constable Davis's voice very thrimblin': "What's wrong, Mrs. Taafe? Is he murdherin' ye? Hould on till I run for help."

"Here's the polis, uncle," shouts Billy from the foot av the stairs. "For marcy sake quiet yourself till I put thim off"—an' Billy makes for the door.

But that minit the uncle lays his hand on the clock, an' in the blind rage he ups with her an' fires her at the windy. There was a tinklin' av broken glass an' a rattle in the sthreet, an' thin whir-r-r-r! away goes the alarm full bindher.

Thin they hears a shout from the constable outside, an' a clatter av feet up the sthreet, an' in a minit the house was as quiet as a graveyard, barrin' the sobs av Billy's aunt upstairs in the bed.

"Was that the polis, did ye say, Billy?" sez

the uncle in a very scared voice from the stair-head.

"It was," sez Billy. "'Twas Davis," sez he, chokin' down a laugh, "an' he's away for help. Hould on till I get a light, an' we'll get the place straited up before they come back. What in the name of wondher were ye doin'? I thought the house had fell, whin I waked."

"Niver mind, now, Billy," sez the uncle,—he was beginnin' to calm down now, an' to see what a fool he'd been makin' av himself,—"fetch a light."

So Billy lights a candle an' goes upstairs. I believe the room was like a battle-field. The table was lyin' in wan corner wi' a leg broke, the lookin' glass in another wi' the face all starred; an' the whole place in a litther wi' broken ornaments an' bottles. The aunt was sittin' up in bed cryin'; an' the husband houldin' on to the bottom av it on wan foot, wi' the other up in the air dicroppin' blood where he had thramped on a piece av wan av the chaney dogs.

"Here, aunt," sez Billy, "I'll light your candle; an' do you fix up me uncle, an' the two av ye get intil bed. I'll run down and get rid av the polis all right. I hear them comin'. Ye can tell me all about it in the mornin'?"

Down goes Billy to the front door, an' that minit there came a powerful battherin' on it, an'

a shout : "Open the door, Mrs. Taafe, if you're not killed. Open to the polis."

Billy opens the door, an' there was the head constable an' two or three more polis, wi' a neighbour or two that had heard the noise.

"There's the murdherin' villain," sez Davis. "He's killed iverybody in the house, an' thin thried to blow it up, an' me wi' it. Seize him !" sez he, edgin' well back.

"Who's killed, ye gomeril ?" sez Billy. "Here, head-constable," sez he, "shout up an' ask me uncle if he's killed." For though the mess he'd made av the uncle had daunted him a bit, the devil was beginnin' to rise in him again.

"Are ye there, Misther Taafe," shouts the head-constable up the stairs.

"It's all right, Head," sez he down till him. "There's nothin' wrong. Spake up, Jenny," sez he ; an' the wife answers too.

But there was a sound av cryin' in her voice, an' the Head wasn't right satisfied.

"What did ye say, Constable Davis, about an infernal machine bein' thrown ? Where did it fall ?" sez he.

"Just behind here, sir," sez Davis. He was as white as a ghost, in the candle-light, an' thrimblin' like a leaf. "There it is," sez he, wi' a shout, an' right enough there was a glittcher av the candle on the platin' av the clock.

The wee crowd starts away back like a dhrove
av sheep, all but the Head.

"Come out here, you," sez he, layin' hold
av Billy. "Fetch that bucket av wather,
Johnson," sez he, "an' give me the shovel.
Here, hould this man."

Thin the Head takes the shovel in his hand,
gathers himself together, makes a race at the
clock, an' has it in the bucket in a twinklin'.

Ieverybody dhrew a long breath, an' there was
a mutther av a cheer, an' "well done, Head-
constable."

"Here," sez Billy, "there's been enough av
this tomfoolery. I'm gettin' me death av cowld
There's no infernal machine, nor nothin' av the
sort. I'll show ye what it is," makin' a move
for the bucket.

But the Head had him by the arm in a minit.
"Keep back, sir," sez he, very fierce. His
blood was up, an' afther liftin' the infernal
machine he was on for anythin'.

"Now listen, Head," sez Billy. "I'll go an'
lift out the——what's in the bucket," sez he;
for he wasn't goin' to spoil the joke yet. "I'll
show it to ye, if ye'll come forward too. Ye're
not afraid, I know. An' I'm not goin' to blow
meself up, ye may swear. 'Twould make too
big a mess in the sthreet."

"I'll do it," sez the Head, settin' his teeth.
"Go on."

"Far marcy sake, sir," sez Davis, "don't let that dispirate fellow touch it. He'll blow us all to etarnity."

"Maybe you'll lift it yourself, Constable Davis," sez the Head, very sharp. "Ah, I thought not," whin he seen him lepp back a couple av feet at the very idea. "Go on, Billy; I'll hould the candle."

So Billy steps forward, the Head close behind him; an' ivery man held his breath. Av coorse, Billy had to keep up the joke, stoppin' ivery foot or two, an' hesitatin' by the way; an' ivery time he checked his step the ring round the bucket widened out bigger. At last he gets to the bucket, an' stoops down an' lifts the clock.

"What is it?" sez the Head, shrinkin' back a thrifle.

"It's a quarther past eleven," sez Billy, lookin' at the clock face.

"What d'ye say?" sez the Head, very cross.

"Just a quarter past eleven, to the minit. Look for yourself," sez Billy, houldin' out the clock.

The Head lifts the candle an' looks at it; thin he steps nearer an' takes it in his hand. For a minit he sez nothin', an' thin: "May the devil fly away wi' me," sez he, an' the Head was a man that didn't often swear, "but it's a common alarm clock."

"Just that," sez Billy, "an' nothin' more. The uncle took a scunner at the tick av it, an' threw it out of the windy. That's the whole murdherin' an' blowin' up there was the night. I doubt, head-constable," sez Billy, "this man av yours is no hero. This night'll not be much av a credit to the force. But niver mind, ye've give a dale av innocent pleasure to your neighbours," sez he, lookin' round at the grinnin' wee crowd. "An' they'll not tell anybody—barrin' wan or two."

The head-constable took it like a man.

"Billy," sez he, "the joke is on us, there's no denyin' it; an' they can tell it to who they like. 'Twill maybe shame this crather Davis out av the force."

"Go back to barracks," sez he to the constable, very wicked, "an' if ye're wise," sez he, "ye'll seek a more suitable employment. It's mindin' chickens, ye should be at, or flowerin' handkerchiefs like the ould woman ye are. Good-night, Billy," sez he. "Tell your uncle an' aunt I'm sorry for puttin' them about. An' you, good people, away home wi' ye. The performance is over."

In a couple of minits the sthreet was cleared, an' Billy steps intil the house wi' the clock. But he might as well ha' left her outside; for between the fall an' the dhrowndin' in the bucket, divil a chime she iver rung since.

CHAPTER VI

THE BALLYGULLION CREAMERY SOCIETY, LIMITED

'Twas the man from the Department of Agriculture comin' down to give a lecture on poultry an' dairy-farmin' that set the ball a rowlin'.

The whole farmers av the country gathered in to hear him, an' for days afther it was over, there was no talk at all barrin' about hens an' crame, an' iverybody had a schame av their own to propose.

Ould Miss Armitage up at the Hall was on for encouragin' poultry-farmin'; an' give a prize for the best layin' hen in Ballygullion, that riz more scunners in the country than the twelfth av July itself. There was powerful stir about it, an' near iverybody enthered.

Deaf Pether of the Bog's wife was an aisy winner if her hen hadn't died, an' nothin' would satisfy her but it was poisoned ; though divil a all killed it but the gorges of Indian male the ould woman kept puttin' intil it.

Ivery time the hen laid she gave it an extra

dose av male, "to encourage the crather," as she said ; an' wan day it laid a double-yolked wan, she put a charge intil it that stretched it out stiff in half an hour.

After that there was no doubt but Larry Thomas's wife would win the prize ; for before the end av the month Miss Armitage had allowed for the test, her hen was above a dozen ahead of iverybody else's.

Howiver, whin it came to the countin' there was a duck-egg or two here an' there among the lot that nayther Mrs. Thomas nor the hen could well account for, so the both av them was disqualified.

An' whin it come to the test, and Mrs. Archy Doran won the prize, she counted up an' made out that between corn an' male she had paid away double the value av it, so she wasn't very well plazed ; an' them that had spint near as much on feedin'-stuff, an' had got no prize, was worse plazed still.

The only wan that come out av it well was Miss Armitage herself ; for she kept all the eggs, an' made above twice the prize-money out av them. But there was nobody else as well plazed about that as she was.

So all round the hen business was a failure ; an' it looked as if there was nothin' goin' to come av the lecture at all.

However, iverybody thought it would be a

terrible pity if Ballygullion should be behind other places ; an' at last there was a move made to start a cramery, an' a committee was got up to set things goin'.

At first the most av us thought they got the crame in the ould-fashioned way, just be skimmin' ; but presently it begin to be talked that it was all done be machinery. Some av us was very dubious about that ; for sorrow a bit could we see how it was to be done. Thomas McGorrian maintained it would be done wi' blades like the knives av a turnip-cutter, that would just shave the top off the milk, an' sweep it intil a pan ; but then he couldn't well explain how they'd avoid shavin' the top off the milk-dish too.

Big Billy Lenahan swore it was done with a worm like a still ; but although we all knowed Billy was well up in potheen, there was few had iver seen him havin' much to do wi' milk ; so nobody listened to him.

At last the committee detarmined they'd have a dimonstrhation ; an' they trysted the Department man to bring down his machine an' show how it was done ; for all av thim was agin spendin' money on a machine till they were satisfied it would do its work.

The dimonstrhation was to be held in Long Tammas McGorrian's barn, an' on the night set above forty av us was there. We all sat round

in a half-ring, on chairs an' stools an' any other conthrivance we could get, for all the world like the Christy Minstrels that comes to the Market House av a Christmas.

The dimonstrator had rigged up a belt to Tammas's threshin'-machine, an' run it from that to the separator, as he called it.

The separator itself was a terrible disappointin' conthrivance at the first look, an' no size av a thing at all for the money they said it cost. But whin the dimonstrator begin to tell us what it would do, an' how by just pourin' the milk intil a metal ball an' bizzin' it round, ye could make the crame come out av one hole, an' the milk out av another, we begin to think more av it.

Nobody liked to spake out wi' the man there, but there was a power av whisperin'.

"It's a mighty quare conthrivance," sez wan.

"Did ye iver see the like av it?" sez another.

"Boys-a-boys," sez James Dougherty, "the works av a man is wonderful. If my ould grandmother could see this, it would break her heart. 'Twas herself was the handy dairy-woman, too; but what'd she be till a machine?"

But most av them wouldn't say wan thing or another till they seen it workin'; an' 'deed we were all wishin' he'd begin. We had to thole, though; for the dimonstrator was a bumptious wee man, an' very fond av the sound av his

own voice, an' kept talkin' away wi' big long words that nobody knowed the manin' av but himself, till we were near deaved.

So we were powerful glad whin he sez to Mrs. McGorrian : "Now, madam, if you'll be good enough to bring in the milk, I will proceed to give an actual demonstration."

But Mrs. McGorrian is a quiet wee woman, an' wi' all the crowd there, an' him callin' her madam, she was too backward to get up out av the corner she was in ; an' she nudges Tammas to go, tellin' him where to get the milk.

So Tammas goes out, an' presently he staggers in wi' a big crock in his arms an' sets it down.

"Now," sez the dimonstrator, "if you'll just get the horses goin', an' pour the milk into that receptacle, I'll start the separator working."

Tammas in wi' the milk, an' the wee son whips up the horses outside, an' away goes the separator bizzin' like a hive av bees.

"In a few seconds, gentlemen an' ladies," sez the dimonstrator, "you will see the milk come out here, an' the cream here. Kindly pay attention, please."

But he needn't have spoke ; for iverybody was lanin' forrad, holdin' their breath, an' there wasn't a sound to be heard but the hummin' of the separator.

Presently there comes a sort av a thick trickle

out of the milk-hole, but divil a dhrap av crame.

The dimonstrator gathered up his brow a bit at that, and spakes out of the barn windy to Tammas's wee boy to dhrive faster. The separator hums harder than iver, but still no crame. Wan begin to look at the other, an' some av the wimmen at the back starts gigglin'.

The dimonstrator begin to get very red an' flustered-lookin'. "Are ye sure this milk is fresh an' hasn't been skimmed?" he sez to Tammas, very sharp.

"What do you say, Mary?" sez Tammas, lookin' over at the wife. "Sartin, sir," sez Mrs. Tammas. "It's just fresh from the cows this very evenin'."

"Most extraordinary," sez the dimonstrator, rubbin' his hair till it was all on end. "I've niver had such an experience before."

"It's the way Tammas feeds his cows," sez Big Billy Lenahan from the back ; "sure iverybody knows he gives them nothin' but shavin's."

There was a snigger av a laugh at this ; for Tammas was well known to be no great feeder av cattle.

But Tammas wasn't to be tuk down so aisy.

"Niver mind, Billy," sez he ; "av you were put on shavin's for a week or two, ye'd maybe see your boots again before you died."

There was another laugh at this, an' that

started a bit av jokin' all round—a good dale av it at the dimonstrator ; till he was near beside himself. For devil a dhrop av crame had put in an appearance yet.

All at wanst he stoops down close to the milk.

"Bring me a candle here," sez he, very sharp.

Tammas reaches over a sconce off the wall. The dimonstrator bends over the can, then dips the point av his finger in it, an' puts it in his mouth.

"What's this?" sez he, lookin' very mad at Tammas. "This isn't milk at all."

"Not milk," sez Tammas. "It must be milk. I got it where you tould me, Mary."

The wife gets up an' pushes forward. First she takes a look at the can av the separator, an' thin wan at the crock.

"Ye ould fool," she sez to Tammas ; "ye've brought the whitewash I mixed for the dairy walls!"

I'll say this for the dimonstrator, he was a game wee fellow ; for the devil a wan laughed louder than he did, an' that's sayin' something. But sorrow a smile Tammas cracked, but stood gapin' at the wife wi' his mouth open ; an' from the look she give him back, there was some av us thought she was maybe more of a tarthar than she looked.

Though troth 'twas no wondher she was angry, for the joke wint round the whole

counthry, an' Tammas gets nothin' but "Whitewash McGorrian" iver since.

Howaniver, they got the machine washed out, an' the rale milk intil it, an' there was no doubt it worked well. The wee dimonstrator was as plazed as Punch, an' iverybody wint away well satisfied, an' set on havin' a cramery as soon as it could be got started.

First av all they wint round an' got the names av all them that was goin' to join in ; an' the explainin' av the schame took a dale av time. The co-operatin' bothered him intirely.

The widow Doherty she wasn't goin' to join an' put in four cows' milk, she said, whin she'd only get as much out av it as Mrs. Donnelly across the field that had only two. Thin, whin they explained to the widow that she'd get twice as much, ould mother Donnelly was clane mad ; for she'd thought she was goin' to get the betther av the widow.

Thin there was tarrible bother over barrin' out wee Mrs. Morley, because she had only a goat. Some was for lettin' her in ; but the gineral opinion was that it would be makin' too little av the Society.

Howiver, all was goin' brave an' paceable till ould Michael Murray, the ould dundherhead, puts in his oar.

Michael was a devil av a man for pace-makin', an' riz more rows than all in the county for all

that ; for whin two dacent men had a word or two av a fair-day, maybe whin the drink was in them, an' had forgot all about it, the next day ould Michael would come round to make it up, an' wi' him mindin' them av what had passed, the row would begin worse than iver.

So, whin all was well set agoin', and the committee met to call a gineral meetin' av the Society, ould Michael he gets up an' says what a pity it would be if the Society would be broke up wi' politics or religion ; an' he proposed that they should show there was no ill-feelin' on either side by holdin' this gineral meetin' in the Orange Hall, an' the nixt in the United Irish League rooms. He named the Orange Hall first, he said, because he was a Nationalist himself, an' a Home Ruler, an' always would be.

There was one or two Orangemen beginnin' to look mighty fiery at the tail-end av Michael's speech, an' there's no tellin' what would a' happened if the chairman hadn't whipped in an' said that Michael's was a very good idea, an' he thought they couldn't do betther than folly it up.

So, right enough, the first gineral meetin' was held in the Ballygullion Orange Hall.

Iverything was very quiet an' agreeable, except that some of the red-hot Nationalists kept takin' quare skellys at a flag in the corner

wi' King William on it, stickin' a man in a green coat wi' his sword.

But as fortune would have it, little Billy av the Bog, the sstrongest wee Orangeman in Ulster, comes in at half-time as dhrunk as a fiddler, sits down on a form an' falls fast asleep. An' there he snored for the most av half an hour, till near the end av the meetin', whin the chairman was makin' a speech, there was a bit av applause, an' up starts Billy all dazed. First he looked up an' seen King William on the flag. Thin hearin' the chairman's voice, he gives a stamp wi' his fut on the flure, an' a "hear, hear," with a mortal bad hiccup between the "hears." The wee man thought he was at a lodge-meetin'.

All av a sudden he sees ould Michael Murray, an', beside him, Tammas McGorrian.

Wi' that he lepps to his feet like a shot, dhrunk as he was, an' hits the table a terrible lick wi' his fist.

"Stap, brethren," sez he, glarin' round the room. "Stap ! There's Papishes present."

Ye niver seen a meetin' quicker broke up than that wan. Half the men was on their feet in a minit, an' the other half pullin' them down be the coat-tails. Iverybody was talkin' at the wan time, some av them swearin' they'd been insulted, an' others thryin' to make pace.

Thin the wimmin begin to scrame an' hould

back men from fightin' that had no notion av it at the start, an' only begin to think av it whin they were sure they wouldn't be let.

Altogether there was the makin's of as fine a fight as iver ye seen in your life.

However, there was a lot av dacent elderly men on both sides, an' wi' arguin' an' perswadin', an' houldin' back one, an' pushin' out the other, the hall was redd without blows, an' bit by bit they all went home quiet enough.

But the Cramery Society was clane split. It wasn't wee Billy so much ; for whin people begin to think about it the next mornin', there was more laughed at him than was angry ; but the party feelin' was up as bitther as could be.

The Nationalists was mad at themselves for givin' in to go to a meetin' in the Orange Hall, for fear it might be taken that they were weakenin' about Home Rule ; an' the Orange party were just as afeard at the papers makin' out that they were weakenin' about the Union. Besides, the ould King William in the corner of the Hall had done no good.

I'm no party man, myself ; but whin I see William Robinson, that has been me neighbour this twinty years, goin' down the road on the Twelfth av July wi' a couple av Orange sashes on, me heart doesn't warm to him as it does av another day. The plain truth is, we were bate

at the Boyne right enough ; but some av us has more than a notion we didn't get fair play at the fightin' ; an' between that and hearin' about the batin' iver since, the look of ould Billy on his white horse isn't very soothin'.

Anyway the two parties couldn't be got to join again. The red-hot wans av both av them had meetin's, wee Billy leadin' wan side, and Tammas McGorrian the other, an' the nixt thing was that there was to be two Crameries.

The moderate men seen that both parties was makin' fools av themselves, for the place wasn't big enough for two ; but moderate men are scarce in our parts, an' they could do nothin' to soothe matthers down. Whin the party work is on, it's little either side thinks av the good av thimeselves or the countrhy either.

It's "niver mind a dig yourself if ye get a slap at the other fellow."

So notices was sent out for a meetin' to wind up the Society, an' there was a powerful musther av both sides, for fear either of them might get an advantage over the other wan.

To keep clear av trouble it was to be held in the Market-house.

The night av the meetin' come ; an' when I got into the room who should I see on the platform but Major Donaldson and Father Connolly. An' thin I begin to wondher what was on.

For the Major was too aisy goin' and kindly to mix himself up wi' party-work, an' Father Connolly was well known to be terrible down on it, too.

So a sort av a mutther begin to run through the meetin' that there was goin' to be an attempt to patch up the split.

Some was glad and not afraid to say it; but the most looked dour an' said nothin'; an' wee Billy and Tammas McGorrian kept movin' in and out among their friends an' swearin' them to stand firm.

When the room was well filled, an' iverybody settled down, the Major gets on his feet.

"Ladies an' gentlemen," sez he—the Major was always polite if it was only a thravellin' tinker he was spakin' to—"Ladies an' gentlemen, you know why we've met here to-night—to wind up the Ballygullion Cramery Society. I wish windin' up meant that it would go on all the better; but, unfortunately, windin' up a society isn't like windin' up a clock.

"Now I'm not goin' to detain you; but before we proceed, I'd like you to listen to Father Connolly here for a minute or two. I may tell you he's goin' to express my opinion as well as his own. I needn't ask you to give him an' attentive hearin'; ye all know as well as I do that what he says is worth listenin' to." An' down the Major sits.

Thin Father Connolly comes forward an' looks roun' a minit or so before speakin'. Most av his own people that catched his eye looked down mighty quick, for they all had an idea he wouldn't think much av what had been goin' on.

But wee Billy braces himself up an' looks very fierce, as much as to say "there'll no praste ordher me about," and Tammas looks down at his feet wi' his teeth set, much as if he meant the same.

"Men an' wimmin av Ballygullion," sez Father Connolly—he was aye a plain-spoken wee man—"We're met here to end up the United Cramery Society, and after that we're goin' to start two societies, I hear.

"The sinsible men av Ballygullion sees that it would be altogether absurd an' ridiculous for Catholics an' Protestants, Home Rulers an' Unionists, to work together in anything at all. As they say, the two parties is altogether opposed in everything that's important.

"The wan keeps Patrick's Day for a holiday, and the other the Twelfth av July ; the colours of the one is green, an' the colours of the other orange ; the wan wants to send their Mimbers av Parliament to College Green, and the other to Westminster ; an' there are a lot more differences just as important as these.

"It's thrue," goes on the Father, "that some

ignorant persons says that, after all, the two parties lives in the same countrry, undher the same sky, wi' the same sun shinin' on them an' the same rain wettin' thim ; and that what's good for that countrry is good for both parties, an' what's bad for it is bad for both ; that they live side by side as neighbours, an' buy and sell among wan another, an' that nobody has iver seen that there was twenty-one shillin's in a Catholic pound, an' nineteen in a Protestant pound, or the other way about ; an' that, although they go about it in different ways, they worship the same God, the God that made both av thim ; but I needn't tell ye that these are only a few silly bodies, an' don't riprisint the opinion av the countrry.

A good many people in the hall was lookin' foolish enough by this time, an' everybody was waitin' to hear the Father tell them to make it up, an' most av them willin' enough to do it. The Major was leanin' back, looking well satisfied.

"Now," sez Father Connolly, "after what I've said, I needn't tell ye that I'm av the opinion av the sinsible men, and I think that by all manes we should have a Catholic cramery, and a Protestant wan."

The Major sits up wi' a start, an' wan looks at the other all over the room.

"The only thing that bothers me," sez the

Father, goin' on an' takin' no notice, "is the difficulty av doin' it. It's aisy enough to sort out the Catholic farmers from the Protestant ; but what about the cattle ?" sez he.

"If a man rears up a calf till it becomes a cow, there's no doubt that cow must be Nationalist or Orange. She couldn't help it, livin' in this country. Now what are you going to do when a Nationalist buys an Orange cow ? Tammas McGorrian bought a cow from wee Billy there last month that Billy bred an' reared himself. Do ye mane to tell me that's a Nationalist cow ? I tell ye what it is, boys," sez the Father, wi' his eyes twinklin', "wan can av that cow's milk in a Nationalist cramery would turn the butther as yellow as the shutters av the Orange Hall."

By this time there was a smudge av a laugh on everybody's face, an' even Tammas an' wee Billy couldn't help crackin' a smile.

"Now," sez Father Connolly, "afther all its aisy enough in the case of Tammas's cow. There's no denyin' she's an orange cow, an' either Tammas may go to the Orange cramery or give the cow back to Billy."

Tammas sits up a bit at that.

"But, thin, there's a lot of mighty curious cases. There's my own wee Kerry. Iverybody knows I bred her myself ; but, thin, there's no denyin' that her father—if that's the

right way to spake av a bull—belonged to Major Donaldson here, an' was called 'Prince of Orange.' Now be the law a child follows its father in these matters, an' I'm bound be it to send the wee Kerry's milk to the Orange cramery, although I'll maintain she's as good a Nationalist as ever stepped—didn't she thramp down ivery Orange lily in Billy Black's garden only last Monday ?

"So, boys, whin ye think the matther out, ye'll see it's no aisly matther this separatin' av Orange an' Green in the cramery. For if ye do it right—an' I'm for no half-measures—ye'll have to get the pedigree av ivery bull, cow, and calf in the counthry, an' then ye'll be little further on, for there's a lot av bastes come in every year from Americay that's little betther than haythin.

"But, if ye take my advice, those av ye that isn't sure av your cows'll just go on quietly together in the manetime, an' let them that has got a rale thtrue-blue baste av either persuasion just keep her milk to themselves, and skim it in the ould-fashioned way wi' a spoon."

There was a good dale av sniggerin' whin the Father was spakin'; but ye should have heard the roar av a laugh there was whin he sat down. An' just as it was dyin' away, the Major rises up, wipin' his eyes :

"Boys," sez he. "if it's the will av the prisint company that the Ballygullion Cramery Society

go on, will ye rise an' give three cheers for Father Pether Connolly?"

Ivery man, woman, an' child—Protestant and Catholic—was on their feet in a minit ; an' if the Ballygullion Market-house roof didn't rise that night, it's safe till etarnity.

From that night on there was niver another word av windin' up or splittin' either. An' if iver ye come across a print av butther wi' a wreath of shamrocks an' orange-lilies on it, ye'll know it come from the Ballygullion Cramery Society, Limited.

CHAPTER VII

THE GREEN CHEESE

It all begun wi' me meetin' Pether Boylan comin' from Ballygullion one Sathurday night.

"Good evenin', Pat," sez he, stoppin' the cart; "wud ye take a parcel up till ould Davis's for me. Major Donaldson sent it, tell him."

"What'll it be?" sez I.

"I don't know," sez he. "But it has a mortal quare smell. It's nothin' livin'," sez he.

"Show me it," sez I. "It's green cheese," sez I, "I'll bate a pound. An' maybe it's livin' too, for all ye say. The quality does ate it whin ye could hardly keep it on the plate wi' a pitchfork. I'll take it up till him if ye're in a hurry."

"It's as good as a shillin' to ye," sez he, laughin', as he drives on.

"If it is," sez I, callin' afther him, "it'll be the first he's give away this ten years."

For though ould Mr. Davis was a gentleman born, an' a brave decent ould fellow at that,

he was heart mane. Whin the wife was livin' he was a great sportin' man, an' open-handed an' hearty enough ; but afther she died he begin to get terrible wee an' greedy.

He sacked all the servants wan by wan till there was nobody left but an ould housekeeper ; an' him an' her lived at the big house up the road from me, all be their lone.

Whin I got up till the house, just at the hall door I came on the ould gintleman himself, dhressed in a shabby ould suit an' a hat would have affronted a scarecrow.

"What have you there, Pat," sez he.

"It's a present from the Major," sez I ; "cheese," sez I, "be the smell."

"So it is, Pat," sez he, twinklin' all over his wrinkled ould face. "Thank ye, thank ye kindly. I'd give ye a drink, but I'm clane out of whiskey just at the minit. However, we'll have wan another time. Anything fresh in the countrhy ?" sez he.

"Not much," sez I. "They do be sayin' that Mr. Hastings has entered 'Black Billy' for the Grand National."

"He may lave it alone," sez he ; "for the baste is no manner of use at a ditch."

"He may," sez I ; "for they say the favourite'll win. I'd back him meself, but sure there's no money in it at six to four. If it was a twelve to wan chance like 'Junius,' now."

"Twelve to wan again' 'Junius,'" sez he ; "it's big odds, an' he's no bad horse. Twelve to wan," sez he, to himself like. "No," sez he, startin' up. "Keep your money in your pocket, Pat. Bettin's the way to lose it ; an' it's hard to get—hard, hard to get," sez he, goin' into the house.

I thought that was all was goin' to be about it ; but next mornin' I wasn't right out av the door till I meets Mr. Davis himself.

"Good mornin', sir," sez I. "How are ye this mornin'?"

"Not well, Pat," sez he, "not well. I had my supper of them cheese," sez he, "an' I slept powerful bad. Pat," sez he, sudden like, "do you believe in dhrames ?"

"Some av thim," sez I. "What were you dhramin', sir ?"

"Pat," sez he in a whisper, "I dhramed that 'Junius' won the National. Three times I dhramed it," sez he. "I wondher—I wondher would it come thrue ?"

The ould fellow was all in a thrimble wi' excitement, an' in troth I was a bit excited meself ; for they do say if you dhrame a thing three times runnin' it's sartain to come thrue.

"I'll put a pound on him," sez I, "anyway. It would be a terrible pity to miss the chance. They say ould Harrison beyont made his

fortune by dhramin' av a gold mine whin he was in Australia."

"He did," sez he; "he did right enough. Give me your pound, Pat," sez he, "I'm goin' to put a thrifle on meself with a Dublin man I used to do a bit with, an' I'll send your pound too. Ye'll get better odds that way."

So away the ould chap goes wi' my pound in his pocket; an' whin I come to meself a bit, thinks I, "it's the right auld fool ye are, puttin' a pound on another man's dhrame.

"But, how-an'-iver, it's away now," sez I to meself, "an' anyway it's in good company, for the ould fellow doesn't part aisy. Who knows what luck we'll have?"

For all that I was like a hen on a hot griddle from this till the National.

The big day come, an' about half-past four, in comes ould Davis intil the yard, an' ye niver seen a man in such heart in your life.

"Pat," sez he, "it's come off—'Junius' has won! Twelve to wan, as I'm a livin' sinner. It's a hundred an' twenty pound in my pocket," sez he.

"An' it's twelve in mine," sez I. "More power to the Major's cheese!"

"D'ye think it was the cheese that done it?" sez he.

"Divil a doubt av it," sez I. "Ye should

take another feed av it—before the Two Thousand, say."

"In throth will I," sez he. "I've hardly touched it since, for it agrees mortal badly wi' me; but I like it a dale betther now, Pat."

"Send me up any sportin' paper ye got between this an' that. We needn't both be buyin' them," sez he. "I'll just keep me eye on what's happenin' an' maybe I'll dhrame somethin' before thin."

So I sent him up *Sport* for a week or two, and wi' readin' at it he begin to get that keen he couldn't wait for the "Two Thousand," but begins to the cheese again.

For a while devil a thing it did for him, but give him heartburn; but afther about ten days he dhramed the winner of a Sellin' Plate, an' a week afther that, two more.

Between the three av thim he made near five hundhred pound, an' me near fifty.

Thin he stopped; for the "Two Thousand" was comin' on, an' he didn't want to spoil himself for that.

About ten days before it he came in to me lookin' very miserable an' down.

"Pat," sez he, "I've done me best, but I can't dhrame av the race at all, an' I've near disthroyed meself wi' that cheese. It's a mortal pity nothin' else is any good, for this cheese atin' is terrible bad for the inside."

"Did ye niver thry nothin' else?" sez I.

"I did, Pat," sez he; "but it was no use. I took a shockin' male av salt herrin's the other night," sez he; "but devil all I dhramed but nonsense. I niver closed an eye at all till twelve, an' thin I fell asleep an' dhramed I was ridin' Widow Murphy's goat in the Derby, an' just on the winnin' post the baste threw me an' butted me in the stomach. Terrible real it was, too, for a dhrame; for whin I awoke I could feel the pain in my inside still. No," sez he; "I'll have to stick to the cheese if its kills me."

Whin it came on till a week before the race, an' him niver dhramin' anything was any good, he was near demented; for the more he made, the greedier he was gettin'. An' to tell the truth I was a bit cut meself; for there was no doubt he was dhramin' powerful at the first.

To make matthers worse the mice got in at the Major's cheese, an' ate it ivery crumb, although the smell might ha' daunted a man let alone a mouse.

Down comes the ould gintleman the next mornin' in a terrible way.

"Have ye any cheese in the house," sez he, "Pat?"

"Devil a crumb," sez I; "it's a thing I niver lip. What's wrong wi' what ye have?"

An' thin he begins cursin' the mice something lamentable, an' bemoanin' his luck,

till I could hardly get out av him what had happened.

"Ye'll have to buy more," sez I. "There's time enough yet to dhrame a dozen winners."

"It's terrible dear," sez he, groanin'.

"What about it?" sez I. "Sure ye're makin' a fortune out av it. Give me a shillin' an' I'll run down to Ballygullion, an' get ye a pound av good stuff."

I'd ha' paid for it meself, but, thinks I, "Ye ould miser; it's a heart's blessin' to make ye spend somethin'."

"No," sez he; "I'll go meself."

Away he goes, an' afther a while he come back wi' a pound av quare yellow-lookin' cheese, that looked more like soap. He was lookin' terrible well plazed, too.

"Man, Pat," sez he, "I'm in luck. I got a pound av Meriky cheese for sevenpence."

"Ye'll not dhrame many winners on that," sez I. "It's poor lookin' stuff."

"Ye niver know," sez he. "Anyway, we'll give it a chance."

An' wi' that off he goes like a shot; for he was afeared I might banther him intil buyin' betther.

The next mornin' down he comes leppin' like a yearlin' calf.

"Pat," sez he, "I've dhramed again. I seen 'Buttercup' win the 'Two Thousand' as plain

as I see you. An outsider, too," sez he, "we'll not get less than twenty to wan."

"Did ye dhrame it more than wanst?" sez I ; for "Buttercup" wasn't thought much av, I may tell ye.

"No," sez he, "but I'll give it another thrial the night."

That night he dhramed it again, an' the nixt night afther that as well.

He'd niver dhramed av a race three different nights before, an' that put any doubt av "Buttercup" out av our heads.

So I made up me mind to make a death this time, an' I give him the whole fifty pound I'd made.

I niver knowed what he put on himself ; but it must ha' been somethin' purty big. For there's no man as venturesome as your miser whin the greed gets the betther av him.

Anyway, ye may guess the state of thrimmles he was in whin he sent an extra sixpence to get the result telegraphed. 'Twas the best thing he could ha' done, too ; for he was that busy frettin' about the sixpence he was spendin' that he hadn't time to worry about the race.

The day av the race came, an' whiniver I seen the boy passin' on the red bicycle I down wi' my spade an' away to the big house. The minit I clapped eyes on the ould gintleman I knowed we were done.

He was sittin' on the hall-door steps lookin' fair dazed, wi' the telegram crumpled up in his hand.

"Is it bad news, Mr. Davis?" sez I.

"Bad news," sez he in a sort av a scrame, startin' up; "ay, bad news indeed. I'm broke," sez he—"broke an' ruined. The baste niver got a place even. Och, och," sez he, wringin' his hands an' rockin' backwards an' forwards on the stone steps, "my money's gone, my good money's gone, that I gathered hard an' sore. Curse the baste," sez he. "Curse him! Curse him!"

He bate his head wi' his hands, an' lamented till ye'd been sorry lookin' at him.

"Well, well, now," sez I, "don't fret yourself like that. Sure *I'm* near broke too."

But that was small comfort till him; for devil a hair he cared I was broke all out.

"Anyway," sez I, "we'll get it back. Sure you've dhramed four winners an' only missed wanst. It's that chape Meriky cheese has done us. If you'd had the pluck to buy a bit av decent cheese, this wouldn't ha' happened. But your heart wouldn't let you," sez I. For by this time I was beginnin' to get vexed at the thought av me own good fifty pound.

"You're right, Pat," sez he, comin' round a bit. "I give in you're right. I was mad not to find out from the Major what sort the first

was. But I'll do it this day," sez he, gettin' on his feet.

"Ye won't," sez I, "worse luck; for the Major died this mornin' at half-past ten."

Wi' that I thought he was off in his tantrums again; for whin he minded to send to the Major he thought he seen his money back an' more.

At long last I got him quieted down to go into Ballygullion an' get as near as he could to the first.

The next night he dhramed a horse sure enough; but the devil a betther it done than third. I lost five pound, an' himself a bit more I'm thinkin'.

Away he goes like a madman to Ballygullion again, an' buys a pound av another kind, dearer nor the first. But sure he might as well not; for his luck was clane gone, an' he dhramed an' ould mare that niver left the post at all—devil keep her there still.

Afther that I stopped; for I seen he was clane done at the dhramin'. But the poor ould gintleman niver went mad at it till thin.

He ransacked every shop in Ballygullion an' through the countryside for green cheese, an' whin that was no good he sent to Belfast, an' Dublin even. But he niver had a bit av luck at all, at all. Half-time he niver dhramed av a

horse, an' if he did dhrame of wan, it wasn't in the first five.

Afther a while I stopped goin' up at all, for whin I wasn'tbettin' he took no manner av intherest in me, an' besides wi' the eatin' av so much cheese he got as carnaptious as a clockin' hen, an' him an' me always fell out whin I advised him to give it up.

But I still heard odd rumours from the neighbours about him; for people's tongues soon begin to go about all the cheese he was buyin'; an' everybody thought he was mad, not knowin' anything about the bettin'.

Then I heard he wasn't well, an' wan afthernoon the ould housekeeper come down to tell me the masther wanted to see me.

As the two av us was walkin' up the road we fell intil crack.

"How's he doin' lately, Molly?" sez I.

"Doin'," sez she. "The ould devil's clane crazy. Ye've heard the notion he's tuk about atin' cheese—devil choke him on it. Sure the house is full av it, an' there's a fresh dose comes ivery post. The money he's spendin' on it is lamentable, him that would ha' wrestled a ghost for a ha'penny. But devil the bite or sup else has come intil the house for a month barrin' potatoes an' oatmale. If it wasn't that the ould fool is near his end I'd ha' left long ago, for I'm near dead wi' the heartburn, an' me guts

does be rumblin' all the time like an empty churn."

"Near his end, Molly," sez I. "Is he bad thin?"

"Bad," sez she. "The docthor's been with him ivery day for a week past. He's with him now. Sure 'twas him sent me for you." An' right enough the docthor met me in the hall.

"Tell me, Pat," sez he; "do you know anything of this notion Mr. Davis has got about the dhramin'?"

"Well, docthor," sez I, lookin' a bit foolish, "he dhramed a winner a while ago, afther a supper av cheese, an' him an' me made a bit av money on it; an' iver since he's been thryin' to do the same again. Iv'e tould him over an' over to give it up, but divil a bit will he."

"Well, go in an' thry him again," sez he. "He'll maybe take more notice of what ye say now; for I've tould him he'll not live above a fortnight if he doesn't quit the cheese."

So away goes I up to the bedroom, an' troth 'twas a cruel sight to see him lyin' there. Terrible failed he was; all gathered up lookin', an' not more than half the size he was whn I seen him last.

"Och, Mr. Davis dear," sez I, "what have ye been doin' to yerself at all, at all."

"I've been ruinin' meself," sez he, "that's all. I'm near a pauper," sez he, in a sort av

heartbroken way, wi' the tears rollin' down his cheeks—me that was a well-off man if I had a' had sense."

"Come," sez I, "you're not as bad as that yet ; you've still a fine place behind ye."

"Have I ?" sez he. "Do ye see that letther? Well, there's six notes av fifty pound in it, an' that's all that's left av what I raised on the same place," sez he.

"Och, och," sez I, "this is terrible altogether. I niver thought it was as bad as this wi' ye."

"Wheesht, Pat," sez he, risin' on his elbow an' spakin' in a whisper. "I'll get it back yet. I've found the right kind av cheese at last. It come just before I tuk to me bed," sez he, "an' I kept a bit in the dhressin'-table unbeknownst to the docthor. I've dhramed 'Clematis' for the 'St. Leger' for sivin' nights now, an' she's a twinty to wan chance. You post this letther to Dublin to-day for me," sez he, "an' I'll come out right yet. The wire'll come to you, an' the docthor'll niver know."

"Is it mad ye think I am," sez I, "to post your last shillin' away. Divil a fear o' me."

"Listen to me, Pat," sez he, "if 'Clematis' wins I'm set up again for me day ; an' I'll niver back a horse again av I was to dhrame a whole circus av thim. An' if she loses, sure I've neither chick nor child to be the worse."

"But what about yourself, Mr. Davis?" sez I.

"Pat," sez he, "if she loses I'll not be long here. It'll break me heart if I don't get me money back. I can't stop thinkin' av it day nor night—day nor night."

"But she'll not lose," sez he. "Somethin' tells me she'll not lose. I've got the right kind av cheese again, I know I have. Ye don't believe it, I see that, an' I'll not tell ye what it is or where I got it—now. But when I've win, an' ye're convinced, I will. Sure there's a fortune in it—aye, a fortune," sez he.

He was sittin' up in the bed be this time, wi' his eyes all bright an' glitterin', an' it come over me whin I looked at him that, sure enough, he wasn't all there.

However, thinks I, what he *sez* is thrue—he'll not be long for this world if he doesn't get his money back, an' I'll give him his chance. Sure we'll know wan way or another in a fortnight. So away I goes an' posts the letter.

Two days afterwards whin I got me *Sport*, I seen that "Clematis" was riz in the bettin' from twinty, till twelve to wan. "That looks well," sez I. An' up I goes to the big house to tell the ould gentleman. He was weaker a good deal, but the news heartened him up a bit.

"Here, Pat," sez he, gropin' under the pillow, "here's a shillin', get a paper ivery day, an' let me know how the bettin' goes."

I had mighty little hope av him afther that, for I don't believe he'd spent a penny on a paper since the mistress died, let alone a shillin'.

But the nixt day the mare was up till eight to wan ; an' afther that she riz in thebettin' steady, an' the ould gentleman kept mendin' ivery day.

Three days before the race she was at four to wan, an' I was cursin' meself that I hadn't the heart to back her whin there was a dacent price to be got.

Thin the nixt mornin' comes out a report in the paper that "Clematis" had broken down in thrainin' an' was scratched.

"It's all up wi' him now," sez I.

Up I goes, intendin' to say nothin' about it, an' make out the mare was doin' well ; but whin I wint intil the room, sure I seen death in his face.

"I'm done, Pat," sez he. "The docthor was here an' towld me about the mare. I didn't want him to know I was bettin' ; but I couldn't thole till you come."

"Divil stretch his long tongue another fut !" sez I. "He might a' had more gumption. But keep up your heart, there'll be betther news in the mornin'."

An' so there was. Next mornin' the paper says the report about "Clematis" was only

partly thtrue, an' she'd start alright. For all that, she was back to the twinties in thebettin', an' all I could do I couldn't cneer the ould gintleman up.

The docthor met me comin' down the stairs, an' afther givin' me the devil's own dhressin' down for deceivin' him, forbids me to go up again.

"He's too wake to stand any excitement," sez he. "If I'd caught ye in time ye'd not have been in wi' him the day."

"But docthor," sez I, "sure the race is on to-morrow, an' if the mare wins you'll let me tell him."

"If the sky falls!" sez he. "Ye might as well expect my pony to win." An' in troth, I couldn't conthradict him.

All the nixt afthernoon from dinner-time I was goin' about like a ghost round a graveyard, lookin' for the telegram. At last, about half-past three, I sees the boy comin' up the road. I run down to meet him an' tuk the invilope out av his han', but me own was thrimmlin' that I could hardly open it.

There was just three words:—"Clematis won easily;" an' whin I read them the sight near left my eyes.

Thin I to my heels an' up the road for the big house wi' me heart in a twitter. I niver looked to right or left, but up to the ould gintleman's room.

The docthor heard me comin', an' steps out on the landin'.

"Wheesht, Pat," sez he, "an' go quietly down if ye have any dacency at all. The man's dyin'," sez he.

"He'll not die," sez I, "if ye'll only let me in. The mare's won I tell ye."

"It's too late," sez he; "he's at his last gasp."

"Let me in," sez I, pushin' past him; "it's not too late yet," an' before he could stop me I was in the room.

The ould gintleman was lyin' very still an' quiet, wi' his eyes half shut; an' whin I seen him me heart near failed me.

But I fell on me knees be the bedside.

"Mr. Davis," sez I, as softly as I could.

He opened his eyes a bit, an' I seen that he knowed me; for they brightened, an' a wee bit av colour come in his face.

"Pat," sez he, in a whisper, "Pat!"

"The mare's won, sir," sez I. "The mare's won! Ye're all right yet. Sure ye'll niver give in now."

The poor ould fellow stretched out his hand, an' laid it on mine that was lyin' on the bed. A sort av a smile come on his face, an' his lips moved a thrifle. When I seen that I leaned over him.

"Pat," sez he, very slow an' faint, "Mooney's
—Sackville Street—thirteenpence a pound."
Thin he stopped.

I looked at his face, an' run out av the room
cryin' like a child.

CHAPTER VIII

FATHER CON'S CARD-TABLE

Whin I was a boy there was nothin' used to plaze me betther than to set me grandfather talkin' about ould days long ago.

'Twasn't hard to get him started ; an' wanst he was well set a-goin' he was as full av ould yarns as a story-book.

Many a winther's night I sat an' listened to him ; till at the last I got to know him all near as well as himself.

Like most ould fellows, all his crack was still av the great times there used to be.

If he was to be believed, in his day there was nothin' but good-fellowship among all sorts ; very little work, an' a dale av sport between jobs ; an' above all plenty av mate an' dhrink, an' a countrypside av people to take the good av it.

I've always had me doubts if he had just the right way av it ; but, right or wrong, ye needn't argue wi' me grandfather.

"Some av us may be betther off than we were, in the way av money," he'd say ; "but

the whole fun is gone out av the countrry, an' the most av the people afther it. Divil a all is left in the countrry parts now but politics an' bad dhrink."

'Twould ha' done ye good to hear him talkin' av the ould sportin' days whin all the heavy farmers av the countrry would turn out at the harriers, ivery man on a good horse, lookin' as well as the ginthry thimselves ; an' the parish priest, an' the recthor, an' the docthor, an' maybe a lawyer or two, in the thick av it.

"Sorrow the lawyer ye'd iver see at a hunt these times," he'd say ; "though ye could raise a whole pack av them in Ballygullion itself. They're too busy skinnin' the farmers."

Thin there was shootin'-parties, an' racin'-matches, and suppers afther all av thim, wi' lashin's an' lavin's for rich an' poor. Och, 'twould ha' tormented ye to hear me grandfather tell av the night's atin' an' dhrinkin' he'd have in a barn or a car-house, whin his betthers was layin' intil it in the parlour.

There was a whole ring av houses in Ballygullion an' out in the countrry where a regular set would give parties an' sprees, ivery man in his turn, an' 'twas a quare week in the winther-time that there wouldn't be somethin' doin', if it was only a rat-hunt.

All sorts was in the same set, me grandfather would say—Protestant an' Catholic, farmer an'

lawyer ; an' the leadin' man av the lot was Father Con McKenna, av Ballygullion.

Be me grandfather's account of him, Father Con was wan av the rale ould sort, hearty an' kindly, hail fellow wi' ivery man in the parish, from the ginthry till the beggar-man, an' as fond av sport as the huntsman himself.

He had the name in them days av mixin' the best dhrap av punch in the counthry, though 'twas little enough av it he dhrunk himself, if you're to believe me grandfather.

Buttermilk, accordin' to him was Father Con's dhrink, an' he was niver tired preachin' the vartues av it.

"Felix," sez he to me grandfather wanst—an' ye may fancy the merry look in his eye—"if ye only dhrink enough buttermilk ye'll niver die. An' it's the best thing in the world, too, for a bad temper. If I didn't dhrink as much av it as I do ye couldn't live in the parish wi' me."

An' thtrue enough I believe if there was anythin' ye could say again Father Con, 'twas that he was a bit hasty, though it niver stayed wi' him long ; an' wi' all the buttermilk he took he niver got right cured. Maybe he ladled his buttermilk out av the punch-bowl now an' thin, in spite av me grandfather, an' that was what kep' it from workin'.

Anyhow, as I said, Father Con was first man in all the diversion was goin', an' wee Ulty

McGra was that well known at the house that the dogs wouldn't ha' barked at him at midnight.

Ulty was a kind av half-witted crather that run messages for the whole round av thim—sometimes an invitation, sometimes a wild-duck or a hare, sometimes only the newspaper that wint round them all—anythin' ye'd name but whiskey. They daren't thrust Ulty wi' that, an' that was mebbe why he was the unfortunate bein' he was.

Me grandfather would still say he niver seen a stitch on him but an' ould overcoat an' a pair av throusers, an' two or three ould rags an' a neck-band he called a shirt. Money or clothes, all went the same way wi' Ulty.

For all that he was well liked in the countrry. They say he was the best av good company—ye niver seen a throughother drunken crather that wasn't—an' could whistle an' sing like a blackbird.

After a while them that had sense would only give him mate, an' nayther dhrink nor money ; an' though there wasn't many av that sort, there was enough av them to keep Ulty alive an' able to hould the whiskey he got from the foolish wans.

Howiver, wan bitther cowld day in December that Ulty was scourin the countrry deliverin' notices that the hunt would be off till the

weather broke, wan an' another give the poor crather that many nips to keep out the frost that they put a long chill on him ; for he was found at the back av a ditch stiff an' cowld.

There was a dale av talk about poor Ulty's end in the countrry ; not a man but was sorry to think he'd niver hear him liltin' along the road av a mornin' again ; an' iverybody said there'd be a big turn-out to bury him.

But whin the day come the weather had broke, an' there was most lamentable rain an' sleet an' wind. Wan says till another, "We should go to Ulty's funeral" : "There'll be plenty there without me," says somebody else ; an' "Sure it's only ould Ulty McGra," sez a third. The end av it was, poor Ulty's bit av a black coffin was carried in an' out av the chapel be a wheen av beggars like himself, an' there wasn't as much put in the plate as would ha' changed half-a-crown.

Me grandfather said he niver seen Father Con lookin' rale savage but that day. He keeked out as the Father was comin' past from the graveyard to say he was sorry he hadn't been able to face out an' make a bit av an offerin' ; but the first look he got was enough for him, an' he waited for no more, but boulted back to the fire again.

Whin Father Con got back to the house that evenin' he was feelin' very vexed an' low ; an'

at last he couldn't hould out any longer, but seein' the rain a bit slackened, he sent out the girl to invite round Mr. Lindsay, the cashier that thin was at the Bank, an' wee McAuley, the sub-inspector ; an' in the manetime he mixed a bowl av very wicked punch.

Prisintly the three av thim was sittin' round the table whackin' away at spoiled five for all they were worth.

"I hear they buried poor Ulty McGra the day," sez Misther Lindsay, afther a while.

"Yes," sez Father Con very short ; "they threw him in the ground anyway, if ye'd call that buryin'."

"Was there a big turn-out ?" sez Misther Lindsay, seein' somethin' was wrong.

"Eight," sez Father Con, wi' a snap—"play to the king av hearts."

Av coarse, Lindsay dhropped the subject afther that ; an' for a while there was nothin' to be heard but the shufflin' av the cards, an' the rattle av the punch-ladle now an' thin.

All wint quiet for a while, till the devil, that still likes to have a dig at the Church, takes it intil his head to give Lindsay the powerfulest run av luck ye iver seen. The five fingers might ha' been growin' on his hand, he held them that often, an' they were niver lonely for want av the knave, an' maybe the ace av hearts

as well. An' as for turnin' up thrumps, divil a card he turned up all night undher a king.

All this time Father Con couldn't dhraw a face card, an' McAuley was no betther. Father Con stood it wondherful well, for he was too angry at the thought av Ulty to let the cards bother him, an' besides he was dippin' a dale the lightest intil the punch ; but McAuley at last gets clane wild wi' a shockin' bad hand he got—all deuces and thrays, but the ace av diamonds, an' it not thrump.

"The very divil's in the cards," sez he, throwin' the hand on the table in a rage.

"Tut-tut," sez Lindsay, chaffin' him ; "ye shouldn't use language like that before Father Con. Where were ye brought up, McAuley ?"

"Don't you begin to teach *me* manners, Lindsay," sez McAuley, very hot.

"Aisy now, boys," sez Father Con. I'd begin to think the divil *was* about, if this wasn't the only house in Ballygullion he isn't on visitin' terms wi'."

"Niver fear ye that the divil has anythin' to do wi' it," sez Lindsay, still chaffin', "or McAuley would be gettin' betther hands. The divil an' the polis is always very kindly, I'm tould. Many a poor sowl they pin between them."

'Twas enough for McAuley. Up he lepps.

"I'll throuble ye to keep your bad tongue off me profession, if ye want the use av your front teeth," sez he, very wicked. "A policeman's a man anyway, an' that's more than ye could say for a bank clerk. Sure they're little betther than counter-hoppers," sez he, "an' not half as honest. No wondher cards is always good to the same class!"

The nixt minit he was wipin' Lindsay's last glass av punch out av his eyes ; an' before ye could say "Jack Robinson" the two av thim was at it hammer an' tongs.

Up jumps Father Con, pulls the card-table intil a corner, an' lifts the lamp off the side-board.

Devil a thought av reddin' thim was in his mind. 'Twas the first thing had cheered him up the whole day.

"Good boys!" sez he, as plazed as punch. "The room's clear—at it now as hard as ye like. Sure a ddrop of punch is well spent on ye. 'Twould be long before two Ballygullion men would show as much spunk. Leather away an' I'll see fair play ; only lave each other's faces alone."

"Stand up to him, McAuley!" sez he, dancin' round till the shade fell off the lamp. "Bully for the polis!" as McAuley hits the cashier wan on the chest that put him in among the fire-irons. "Niver mind the furniture,"

sez Father Con, kickin' the broken bits av the shade behind him undher the sofa, "as long as ye keep off me grandfather's card-table."

'Twas an unlucky word.

Wi' the very sound av it Lindsay lets dhrive a right-hander at the sub-inspector that took him fair undher the chin. Back he staggers all dazed, an', as bad luck would have it, plumps down fair on the top av the table.

Wan leg goes wan way an' wan another, an' the next minit McAuley was sittin' in the middle av the wreckage av it. They say there wasn't as much left in wan piece as would ha' done to toss ha'pence on.

But, och ! there was only wan angry man in the room thin, an' the name av him was Father Con McKenna.

He stamped an' he danced, an' he shook the lamp in their faces till the globe wint to look for the shade, an' all the time his tongue niver lay.

"Out av me house, ye pair av villains ; you're not fit to be let intil a decent man's dwellin'. This is what I get for takin' ye in off the sthreets whin not a sowl in Ballygullion would rub shouldhers wi' ye. First ye dhrink me punch—that iver I should ha' wasted good whiskey an' lemons on ye!—an' take me money, an' thin whin ye think ye've got all out av me ye can—like the pair av hungry beagles that ye are—ye smash me wee table

that three generations av the McKennas has played cards on.

"But 'tis what I desarve for lettin' the like av ye cross the door. 'Twould be long before a couple av dacent Ballygullion boys would ha' played me this dirty thrick. Look at it," sez he, "look at it! Oh, be the powers," gettin' madder as he seen more av the wreck, "I'll be the death av wan av ye. Hould your tongues!" sez he, though they were both too dumbfoundered to thry an' say a word. "Out wi' ye!" an' he takes a run-race at McAuley wi' the lamp that sends him out av the hall-door in a twinklin'. They say he'd a' gone through the fan-light if the door hadn't been open, he was that scared.

"An' you, ye villain," sez Father Con, turnin' on poor Lindsay, 'twas you was the instigator av the whole throuble; takin' the money off a dacent young fellow that maybe hadn't it to spare, an' thin fallin' on him wi' your fists. Out wi' you nixt!"—an' he gives another roar av vengeance.

But Lindsay stood his ground like a man. For wan thing he was sorry for what had happened, an' for another it still kept runnin' in his head as well as the punch would let it that 'twould be no great help to the business av the Ballygullion Branch if it got about that he had insulted the parish priest.

He was a quick-witted fellow too, an' knowed Father Con like a book.

"Father Con," sez he, "would ye listen to me a minit——"

"No, nor half a wan," sez Father Con. "Me toe is itchin' for ye as it is. Out wi' ye, or I'll forget that I'm a man av peace!"

"A minit now," sez Lindsay, puttin' his hand in his pocket an' pullin' out a handful av silver an' copper. "I'm goin' now! I'm goin'! but there's a thrifle av money I want to give ye first."

"What!" roars Father Con, gettin' purple in the face wi' rage; is it offer me money for me table? There's not as much money in your Bank as would pay me for it, if I'd take money; an' there'll be less to-morrow be the wee bit I've kept wi' ye. Offer me *money*! Do ye want to provoke me, Mistrher Lindsay?" sez he, settin' down the lamp.

"Ah, now, Father Con, listen to me, will ye now, a minit?" sez Lindsay. "It's not about the table, it's about a congregational matter, if that's the right word."

"An' what have ye to do wi' my congregation?" sez Father Con. "It'll be little from this on, if I've me way."

"It's just poor Ulty McGra that's gone," sez Lindsay. "Him an' me was very thick, Father Con. Many's the job he done for me, an'

many's the ould yarn he tould me since I come to Ballygullion first ; an' I want to pay a bit av respect to his memory, now he's away. I've made about a couple av pounds here the night, an' if ye'll take the money from a Protestant, an'll let me add a sovereign av me own, I'd like ye'd say a Mass or two for the crather's sowl. God rest him," sez he, "he was as good a man as any av us, if he was a bit unfortunate ; an' I'd like to see him have the rites av a Christian. Ye may think I'm thryin' to get round ye be a back door, Father Con, an' mebbe that was what was in me head at the first ; but I'd like ye to believe it wasn't all that, an' to take the little offerin' for the sake av Ulty an' our ould friendship."

An' troth, though it started wi' pure blarney on Lindsay's part, I believe it was rale enough before he stopped ; for be me grandfather's account av him he was a dacent, soft-hearted fellow, an' mortal good to the poor man.

Divil a word sez Father Con, but sets down the lamp an' houlds out his hand. They say the tears was in his eyes.

"Alec Lindsay," sez he, "you're a good man, an' I'm an ill-tempered ould reprobate. Go home an' forget what an ould fish-wife I made av meself. In the mornin' McAuley'll be in wi' ye to shake hands, if I have to fetch him be the scruff av the neck ; an' if the two av ye'll

face back here the morrow night ye can wreck the whole establishment if ye want to, an' welcome. I'll do the thing ye ask me—proud an' glad I'll be to do it ; an' if your name doesn't go down in Ballygullion for a kindly decent man, it'll not be the fault av Con McKenna."

All the rest av the week there was great talk about Ulty's funeral, an' how few there had been at it, an' how angry Father Con was, an' on the Sunday the chapel wae full to the doors.

For though ivery wan thought he had a good enough excuse himself, he thought the other fellow desarved a lick, an' would likely get it.

The sermon was all about charity ; an' as it wint on an' there was no mention av Ulty, there was a kind av disappointment in the congregation. But if they'd only knowed it, they were goin' to get their fill.

Just whin they thought he'd done, Father Con makes a long pause, an' looks round the whole chapel. Iverybody sat up, for they knowed it was comin' at last.

"An' now," sez he, "ye have heard a good dale about charity in a gineral way ; an' I'd like to bring it home to ye a bit closer. Last Tuesday a fellow-creature was buried in this parish ; ye all knew him well—Ulty McGra. An' whin Ulty was livin' among ye, ye were all very

charitable to him—whin it cost ye nothin' ye missed. Wan would give him a piece av bread, an' another a handful av male, or a cowld potato or two. An' some av ye would give him dhrink that he would ha' been betther without ; though, maybe, seein' it was kindly meant, the harm ye did'll be forgiven ye.

“ But whin the poor bein' died, in this great parish an' town av Ballygullion, was there wan to think he had a sowl to be saved, was there wan to lay an offerin' on the crather's pauper coffin, out av all the friends an' cronies that made much av him an' helped to send him to his long home ?

“ Not wan man.

“ If it hadn't been for a few dacent crathers as poor as himself, an' God knows, as kindly, Ulty McGra would ha' gone to his grave like a dog, barrin' for the service I read over him. Ye'll say, some av ye, it was wet, an' ye were afraid to face the weather.

“ But whin the Ballygullion races come off three weeks ago, an' the heavens was fair openin', an' the course like a river bed, was I dhramin', or did I see the big end av this congregation hangin' round the backs av ditches wi' their coats runnin' wather, for fear the races would go on, an' they'd miss some av the sport ? Was there any av ye afraid av the weather thin ?

"Think shame av yourselves, men av Ballygullion ! an' think double shame av yourselves whin ye hear what I'm goin' to tell ye now. I said there wasn't wan av poor Ulty's friends to think av his immortal sowl ; but I was wrong. Wan man there was, wan just man in Sodom —Mr. Alec Lindsay, ay the Ballygullion Bank. A Protestant, mark ye, a man that doesn't believe in many av the mysteries av our sacred religion ; but a man that I call an example to all av ye for kindliness and charity.

"He come to me two days ago : 'Father Con,' sez he, 'ye buried poor Ulty the day. I couldn't get away from me business to go to his funeral, but I'd like to make a little gift for the repose av his sowl. I know,' sez he, 'ye must have got a big offerin', for rich and poor was fond av Ulty'—do ye not blush, men av Ballygullion?—'but I'd like ye to take this thrifle from me an' add it to the rest.' An' what did he put in me hand, think ye ? Three pounds, an' betther, as I'm a Catholic priest, an' whin I laid it wi' the two or three coppers poor Ulty's comrades had gathered, I was sorry an' ashamed for the Catholics av Ballygullion."

But wi' that me grandfather that was sittin' in wan av the back seats could thole no longer ; for 'twas himself had near got his death at the same Ballygullion races, an' Father Con's words

come terrible home till him. So he just whips out an' across the sthreet home, an' brings back a big delf dish an' an ould huntin'-crop av Ulty's that he took off him whin he was found, an' sets the dish up in the porch wi' the huntin'-crop behind it. He niver tould me what he put in himself; but I'm sure he didn't affront the poor crather's memory.

An' as the congregation come out there wasn't a mother's son but knewed what was meant; an' I'm tould such a rattle av coppers an' silver, aye, an' even gold, was niver heard since Ballygullion was a parish.

"I don't know"—me grandfather would still end up—"I don't know whether Ulty would ha' been long in Purgathory anyway, for I'm thinkin' the poor does most av their penance in this world; but there must ha' been as many Masses bought for his sowl as freed him twice over. An' though times is changed since thin, an' ye dare hardly take a hand av spoiled five at the back av a ditch now-a-days without the neighbours callin' out on ye, there's no denyin' that in a manner av spakin' Ulty McGra rid out av Purgathory on the wreck av Father Con's card-table."

CHAPTER IX

THE KEG OF POTEEN

His full name was Pether MacDermott, but nobody iver called him anything but "wee Mac," or maybe, sometimes, "the masther."

He was a wee, black-avised man wi' black side whiskers an' a white-lookin' face ; an' his eyes was a kind av boiled lookin' wi' whiskey.

As long as I mind him, an' that's above twenty years, he had been schoolmaster at Ballygullion, an' all that time he'd been dhrinkin' like a herrin'.

If iver he wint to bed sober, 'twas because the pubs was shut before he got right full ; an' even then he was hard to bate, for whin the dhrouth was on him he'd ha' faced turpentine itself.

Wan night there was a magic-lantern show in the schoolhouse, an' they'd kep' him sober be hard watchin', he dhrunk the methylated spirits for the lamp unbeknownst to the man that owned the lantern, an' they had to put the show off, an' give the money back.

But they couldn't get him put out av the school. For all he'd be as drunk as a fiddler the night, he'd turn up brave an' respectable in the mornin'; an' to see him goin' to the school wi' a black coat an' an ould tall hat, you'd niver ha' thought it was the wee man that was threw out av Michael Casshidy's roarin' full the night before.

Mornin' or evenin', dhrunk or sober, he always wore the tall hat. They said he wint to bed in it.

There was wan bould bid made to shift him. 'Twas the time the sargin' av polis found him lyin' in the sheugh on a Sathurday night, an' brought him before the Bench on the Monday. They say he was more than ordinary full, be rayson that his uncle that was in Amerikay had sent him twinty pound.

Howiver, wi' Sunday comin' in, his head got well shired; an' on the Monday he was as fresh as a cricket in a ditch. He give the childher a half-holiday, an' wint off to the Coort like a teetotaler, barrin' a breath you could ha' lit wi' a match.

An' for all the sargin's hard swearin', an' he swore like a veterinary surgeon on a horse case, the masther clane bamboozled him. There was nobody there but them two selves, whin the sargin lifted him, and the sargin was no great teetotaler himself; so, between that an' a

bit av a lanin' towards him, Major Donaldson, the Chairman, had, for ould neighbourship sake, he got off flyin'; an' the sargin was reprimanded for what the Major called "excess av zale."

From that day on the sargin's knife was in the masther up till the hilt, but he niver got a chance at him till the time I'm goin' to tell ye av.

Wan November night, as me an' four or five others was sittin' in Michael Casshidy's, big Billy Lenahan, a terrible man for a joke, calls us all round him.

"Boys," sez he, "if yez are game for a bit av fun, I could put yez on till a big set."

"What is it, Billy?" sez I.

"Well," sez he, "I hear the sargin's gone to Dublin for a couple av days——"

"An' I hope he'll miss his way back," sez Michael Casshidy across the bar.

There was a wee matther av prohibited hours between Michael an' the sargin that had stood Michael forty shillin's an' costs, an' a mark on his license as well.

"Wheesht, Michael," sez I, "an' let the man tell his story."

"Well," sez Billy, goin' on, "yez know there's some wicked men does be keepin' a bit av a still up in the hills beyont."

We all had a bit av a laugh to ourselves at

that ; for the four men that run the same still was in the room, an' Billy was the boss man himself.

But Billy niver smiled. "Supposin'," sez he, "some av these men tuk the masther up the hills a bit, an' give him a wee keg av the rale stuff, an' wan av us dhressed up in the sargin's clothes an' come on him carryin' it home, do yez think," sez he, "there'd be a hunt ?"

"Hunt," sez Long James Heggarty. "There'd be a hunt my legs would hardly keep up wi', for all they're brave an' long. But how'd ye get the sargin's clothes ?"

"Niver mind that," sez Billy, "the two constables an' me is brave an' thick, an' I think I can work it. If you an' James, Pat," sez he to me, "I'll bring the masther up till the foot av the loanin' below the Whinny Hill the morrow night about nine, Pether an' John here'll bring down the potheen, an' I'll do the sargin. Him an' me's about a build," sez he. "Be there as soon afther nine as ye can, an' get the keg on his back, an' whin yez hear me comin' do you shout, 'here's the sargin !' The masther'll not be long in the wan place afther that, I'm thinkin'."

So 'twas all arranged, an' the next night about eight Long James an' me goes round for the masther, to catch him before he wint to Michael's.

"D'ye think he'll come?" sez James, as we were walkin' over to the house.

"Come?" sez I. "Man, he'd go to hell for a dhrink, sure ye know that."

"It's mighty little he'd get in the same place," sez James. "However, he'll likely go the length av the hill, anyway."

There wasn't much persuadin' to do. It was all we could manage to keep him from bein' at the spot at half-past eight, as soon as he heard av the potheen. However, he kep' us well up to time, an' just on the bat av nine we come to the foot av the loanin'.

There we found John Kinner and Pether Larney, wi' a wee keg av potheen ready for slingin' on a man's shouldhers.

"Boys," sez the masther, "this is rale good av ye. Will yez have a wee dhrift before ye go?"

"No, thank ye, sir," sez John. "We'd betther waste no time. There's no knowin' but the sargin' might come on us. He's always nosin' about here."

"Come on then, boys," sez the masther, all in a flurry; "sling it on me back, an' we'll be out av this."

So we got it on his back, an' just as we had it done, Pether Larney raises a shout. "Run, boys, like the devil, here's the sargin'!"

The words wasn't out av his mouth till the

masther was away down the loanin' like a hare, splashin' through the gutthers, wi' the wee keg dundherin' on his backbone cruel. James an' I afther him double quick.

"We'll take to the fields, boys," sez he in a gasp, whin we got to the bottom av the loanin'. "Stick to me an' we'll bate that police divil yet. If he gets me, me school-teachin's over in Ballygullion. Aise the keg off me back till I get up the ditch."

Just as he was up on it, we hears a yell from behind ; an' the wee man gives a spang an' over. The keg pulls out av James's hands an' comes down on his back wi' a wallop. There was a terrible clatther av broken glass.

"Blood an' ouns !" sez James, "what's that ?" as we lept over afther him.

"Nothin'," sez the masther, "just a wee ddrop I had in me pocket to keep me from havin' to open the keg. Niver mind it," sez he, an' away he goes tearin' down the field.

"Will Billy miss us, d'y'e think ?" sez James, as we run along afther him.

"Not him," sez I, "he'll ha' seen us crossin' the ditch. If he has a nose at all, he could near thrack us be the scent, anyway. Sure the masther's lavin' a thrail av whiskey would do for a dhrag-hunt."

Wi' that we hears another yell behind us closer than the first.

"He's not missed us," sez I ; "there he's over the ditch."

"That's not Billy's voice," sez James.

"It's not very like," sez I ; "but who else could it be?"

"It's terrible like the sargin's," sez James.
"There's two av them too," sez he, lookin' back.

There was another yell, closer still. We could ha' caught the words if we hadn't been runnin'.

"Be me sowl," sez James, "it's the sargin himself."

An' right enough it was. We lost time in the nixt ditch, an' thin we could hear him quite plain, shoutin' on us to stop.

"Run, Masther MacDermott, dear, for the love av Hivin," sez I ; "it's the sargin himself that's on us."

"Av coarse it is," sez he ; "didn't ye know that all along? Come on. If we were over the brook here, we're on betther ground, an' we'll bother him yet."

"Dhrop the keg, masther," sez James.

"Divil a bit av me," sez the masther, between his teeth, "if I burst myself. Now, boys, for the brook!"

He tuk off well from the brow av it, an' James an' me give him a shove that lit him on the far side on his mouth an' nose.

But the ould tall hat jumped off his head an' lit in the wather.

"Me hat!" sez he, gettin' to his feet.

"Damn your hat," sez James. "Come on, or we're catched."

"If I'm catched," sez the wee man, "I'll be catched like a gintleman. Get the hat," sez he, "or I'll not budge."

"Blast ye for a wee fool," sez I, "do ye want us catched too? Will ye come on, or we'll lave ye an' your hat both."

But be this time he was in the brook, gropin' for it.

"Come on, Pat," sez James, "an' lave him there, bad scran to him!"

"No, no, James," sez I, "we can't do that in any dacency. We brought him intil this, an' we'll ha' to stick to him. It's too late now, anyway. Here's the sargin, an' wan av the polis. He's callin' us be name."

Just on the word up comes the sargin blowin' and puffin', an' a constable wi' him, near as far through as himself.

"Aha! James Heggarty an' Pat Murphy," sez he; "ye're well caught this time. Ye thought I was away, did ye, an' ye could make poteen as ye plazed? An' who's this in the ditch? . . . Be the Lord," sez he wi' a yell, "it's the masther!"

"Good-night, Misther MacDermott," sez he, as the wee man scrambled up the brook side. "If it doesn't put ye about," sez he, salutin'

him very polite, "maybe ye'd step up till a magistrate's wi' me an' your friends here. An' we'll just go up to Major Donaldson's. He's a friend av yours, an'll be right glad to see ye."

"It'll bother him to save ye this time," sez he, very wicked all at once. "He'll not call this 'excess av zale,' I'm thinkin'," an' he tapped the keg.

Nobody spoke ; an' all the way to the Major's not a word was said.

The masther walked in front wi' his head down, and the keg bobbin' up an' down on his back ; for the sargin never offered to take it off him.

"Whatever has come on Big Billy ?" sez I to James, in a whisper.

"I don't know," sez James, "an' I'm not frettin' much. To hell wi' him an' his jokes. This'll sound well in Ballygullion in the mornin' ; forbye that we'll be fined in about twinty pound apiece,—if we get off wi' a fine."

The five av us were showed intil the Major's office, an' prisintly he came in himself in his evenin' dhress, smokin' a cigar.

Whin his eyes fell on the masther sittin' wi' the keg on his back, an' lookin' like a dog wi' a tin to his tale, he gives a whistle.

Thin he sees the sargin.

"What's this ?" sez he, "what's this, sargin ?"

"Just a gang of shebeeners, your Worship," sez the sargin. "An' I'm sorry to say," sez he, wi' a grin as far from a sorry man's as iver ye seen—"I'm sorry to say Misther MacDermott's at the head av it. I've caught him red-handed, as ye see. If ye'll make out the committal order I'll have him to the barracks for the night, an' they can be returned for thrial at the Bench to-morrow."

The Major looked terrible cut ; but he sez nothin', but goes for a pen an' ink.

"How did this come about, Sargin Thomas?" sez he, in a stern voice. "But wait a minit, sargin," breakin' off an' ringin' the bell.

"Mary," sez he to the servant, "bring in some whiskey an' wather."

Whin it come he poured out glasses apiece.

"Give these unfortunate men a dhrink, sargin," sez he ; "they look tired an' wet. An' maybe you and the constable will take a little. You're nearly in as bad a state as they are."

Afther we all were done, he left the bottle down beside the masther—for he knew his man—an' whin he turned round to his writin' desk, the wee man poured himself out a rozener would ha' made a cat spake.

"Now, sargin," sez the Major.

"Well, sir," sez the sargin, clearin' his throat, an' spakin' as if he was in the witness box,

"I was in the barracks at eight o'clock p.m., this evenin', when William Lenahan came in."

"William Lenahan?" sez the Major, in a bothered way.

"Big Billy av the Hills," sez the masther. He was comin' roun' fast wi' the second dhrink.

"Oh, yes," sez the Major. "Go on, sargin."

"William Lenahan," sez the sargin. "I asked him what I could do for him. He seemed surprised to see me, an' said he thought I was in Dublin. Thin I begin to smell a rat," sez the sargin, warmin' up, an' dhroppin' his witness box voice.

"Wondherful!" sez the masther. "I thought ye had no nose except for whiskey."

"I asked him what he wanted, seein' that I was there," sez the sargin, goin' on as if he hadn't noticed the masther; "an' he said he had heard there was a reward offered for the men that was makin' poteen, an' he had called to find out quietly. Thin I begin to see how the cat was jumpin'," sez the sargin, rubbin' his hands.

"Was she jumpin' afther the rat ye smeit, sargin?" sez the masther.

The Major choked a bit over his paper. "Hold you tongue, MacDermott," sez he "Well, sargin?"

"Well, sir, I don't know whether he had quite made up his mind to bethray his confidherates or not; but he hadn't bargained on encountherin' *me*," sez the sargin, swellin' out his chest, "an' afther interrogatin' him for some time, I got out av him that there was a convoy av poteen comin' down the hills to-night, an' if I'd be at the loanin' below the Whinny Hill, between nine an' half-past, I'd catch some av the dippidators."

"I'll niver believe it," sez the masther, thryin' to rise till his feet, an' sittin' down sudden, through the keg catchin' on the back av the chair. "Billy niver sold the pass, I'll swear."

"So I went to the spot," goes on the sargin, still not noticin' him, "an' afther a long chase I captured the villains. The ringleader, MacDermott——"

"Misther, to you," sez the masther.

"The ringleader, *Misther MacDermott*," sez the sargin wi' a sneer on the "mister" "wi' a keg av poteen on his back. It's there still, as ye may see."

"There's nobody knows that betther than me, that's carried it since nine o'clock," sez the masther. "Sure the maker's name is branded on me shouldher blades be this time. But how do you know it's poteen?" says the masther. "You'll have to prove it."

The sargin looks at Major Donaldson.

"As a matther av form, ye must, sargin,"
sez the Major.

"Just take the keg off me back an' bore a
bit av a gimlet hole in it, an' I'll test it meself,"
sez the masther, "I'm terribly dhry."

"I'm surprised to hear it," sez the Major,
lookin' at his bottle. "But we'll thry a ddrop
av poteen for your complaint. Ring the bell,
sargin."

"Mary," sez he to the girl, "bring a gimlet
and a clane tumbler."

So they got the keg off the masther's back,
an' afther borin' it they dhrew a glass, an' right
enough the Major handed it to the masther.

The wee man takes a good pull at it, an' all
at once begins chokin', an' spluttherin' an'
coughin' as if he was in the last thraws.

"What's wrong, masther? What in Hivin's
name is wrong?" sez the Major, takin' the
glass out av his hand an' smellin' it. He
looked puzzled for a minit, an' then put it till
his lips.

"Run for the priest, boys!" sez he, "the
masther's poisoned!"

"What is it, Major dear?" sez I. "What
is it at all, at all?"

"Wather," sez he, "be me sowl. Spring
wather, as I'm a magistrate!"

"What!" sez the sargin, wi' a roar.

"Wather," sez the Major, "Divil a doubt av it. Taste it yourself, sargin, if ye don't believe me."

The sargin just wet his lips wi' it, and put it down; an' then I knowed it was all right, for the sargin was no fonder av wather than the masther was.

"It seems to be wather," sez the sargin, lookin' terrible foolish.

"Ye'll hardly commit me for carryin' a dhrift av wather home, Major Donaldson," sez the masther between coughs.

But the Major couldn't spake. He was lyin' in the chair laughin' fit to break his heart, an' ivery man in the room was followin' suit—barrin' the sargin.

"Oh, sargin, sargin," sez the Major, wipin' his eyes, "they'll laugh ye out av Ballygullion for this."

Divil a word the sargin spoke, but glowers round wi' the eyes standin' in his head. Thin he motions to the constable, claps the helmet on his head, an' out of the room like a madman, the constable afther him, thryin' to keep his face straight.

Whin we had our laugh out—"Boys," sez the Major, "take another dhrink, an' go home to your beds. I don't know who plotted this, but I'm niver likely to get a betther laugh, anyway."

"Take a good dhrop, masther," sez he ; "your stomach has got a surprise this night'll take it a long while to get over."

Whin we'd done he showed us to the door himself, an' bid us "Good-night."

At the bottom av the avenue we come on Big Billy, sittin' on somethin', be the roadside, an' laughin' till the fat shook on him.

"Don't spake to me, boys," sez he. "Sure I know all about it. The sargin's away down the road as if the divil was afther him. Didn't I bamboozle him this night," sez he.

"Ay, an' ye bamboozled me too," sez the masther. "I'm near dead wi' the runnin' an' the fright. You an' your jokes'll be the death av some dacint man."

"Niver mind, masther," sez Billy, risin' an' pickin' up a keg. "Here's somethin'll console ye. This is the rale Simon Pure this time."

"It's not wather again, Billy ?" sez the masther, doubtin' like.

"Thry it," sez Billy ; "a dhrop av as good poteen as ye iver lipped."

"Come down to the house, boys," sez the masther. "We've had a hard night ; but we'll warm our hearts before we go to bed. An' we'll dhrink Billy's health too ; for he's dhrawn the sargin's teeth this time. He's made a common gull av him," sez he ; "an' thim that doesn't laugh at it in Ballygullion in the mornin'll not cry anyway."

CHAPTER X

THE FLITTING

Marryin's like horse-racin'—there's a dale in a good start. Wee Sammy Doran begun be lettin' the wife wipe her feet on him ; an' if the Lord hadn't been good till him he'd ha' been a door-mat all his days.

In a way ye could hardly blame him. He'd been used to knucklin' down to the weemin folk from he was born, an' the habit come aisy to him. From he was a boy the ould mother had ruled him wi' a rod of iron ; an' I suppose he thought all weemin was the same.

An' 'deed he niver had much chance to find out to the differs. Whether it was that the mother didn't think as much av other weemin as she did av herself, or because she'd been left her livin' on the farm as long as Sammy didn't marry,—anyway, she looked afther him that well that till the day av her death he hardly changed ten minits' crack wi' a woman undher sixty.

No hard-faced ould runt av a servant-maid need iver want a place while ould Mrs. Doran

was alive an' lookin' for a girl. They niver lasted long wi' her, though. If iver wan av thim spoke a civil word to Sammy, out she wint. The only dacint girl they iver had got the sack because she asked him wan evenin' if he wouldn't like more sugar in his tay.

Few men would ha' tholed it as long as Sammy did ; but he was a quiet, dacent wee crather, kindly to the heart's core, an' always willin' to do anythin' for peace sake. Besides, the mother was ould, an' he still thought he'd be his own masther some day.

However, 'twas longer than he expected. No sooner was the ould woman gone than big Miss Allison of the Bog, bein' a bit past her market, an' knowin' 'twas her last chance, made such a set at him that between him bein' a bit flatthered, an' her land marchin' his, she married him before he got dhrawin' his breath.

Worse might ha' happened him too ; for she was a strappin' big woman still, an' a good manager, an' brought him twenty-five acres av as good land as there was in the county ; an' as I say, if he'd only started right wi' her he mightn't ha' done so badly. But she was a pushin', hechtorin' woman wi' a bitther temper, an' a mortal bad tongue, an' had had her own way all her life ; an' wi' Sammy bein' eight or ten years younger than she was, an' used to givin' in, before they were married a month

he was only a wee boy in the house, just the same as in his mother's day. Worse in troth. As long as he kept away from the weemin he used to have some say about the place, thin ; but whin he got the wife he lost even that.

In ways, mind ye, it was for his good. He had plenty av wit, an' was no bad farmer, but he was far too soft an' good-natured for the folks that's goin' about these days, an' people took advantage av him. For wan thing, he kept two or three ould hauchlin' fellows about the place because they'd been there in his father's day, an' his heart wouldn't let him sack them ; an' I needn't tell ye that whin they found that out he got more blarney than work out av them. An' thin the house was a happy-huntin' ground for all the loafers and sthravaguers in the counthry. Ye had only to go an' make a poor mouth to Sammy an' he'd ha' give ye the coat off his back.

But I can tell ye there was a clane sweep made av idle men whin the new misthress come ; an' if iver ye seen a beggar man or a sthrollin' fiddler goin' up the avenue to the house ye might swear they'd met the good woman on the road.

An' though be the time they were ten years married the wee man had to walk about the house on his tip-toes an' dare hardly as much as say his name was Sammy, there was nothin'

come harder till him than havin' to turn a beggar from the door. Av it was a musician av any kind it fair broke his heart ; for he dearly loved a verse av a song, an' would rather ha' had a tune on the fiddle than his dinner, any day.

'Twas only whin the wife was away he got it though ; for beggars av all kinds was fair death to her, an' above all things she hated a fiddler.

Ye'd ha' said there was a kind av instinct in it, as it turned out ; for 'twas a fiddler was the downfall av her; as you're goin' to hear.

Whin they were about eleven years married, wan night afther they were gone to bed there come a terrible clatter in the yard, an' two or three lamentable shouts av a man's voice.

Up gets the wife in the bed. "What's that, Sammy ?" sez she, very cross, for she'd been near over. "D'ye hear me !" sez she, " ye heavy-headed lump, what's that ?"

"I don't know, Susan dear," sez Sammy, " I don't know at all. Maybe it's the heifer broke loose," sez he, for the want av somethin' betther to say.

"Av coarse it's the heifer," sez she, very mad. "That'll be her voice we heard. She's likely walkin' up an' down the yard, talkin' to the pig. Get up, ye silly dundherhead, an' see what it is, instead av lyin' there guessin' riddles."

Up bounces Sammy, pulls on his breeches, an' opens the windy. Just as it opens there comes a desperate clatter outside av somebody fallin' over a zinc bucket, an' at the same time two or three twangs as if a fiddle was gettin' very sore abuse.

"It's the fiddler McCormack for a pound," sez Sammy. "Is that you, fiddler?" he calls out.

Wi' that there comes a terrible pitiful voice from the yard : "Oh, Misther Doran, Misther Doran dear, come down an' spake to me, for I'm in the sore state. Me an' the family is flittin' our bits av things over till Derrybroom, an' we've got out av our road, and the mule is rusted an' won't go a fut furdher than your gate, an' we're all desthroyed wi' rain an' wind. Will ye not come down an' give us shelther till the mornin'?"

"Shut that windy, Sammy," sez the wife from the bed. "An' tell that dhrunken ould scallywag to be off about his business."

"But, Susan," sez Sammy—

"Shut the windy, I tell ye," she shouts, very wicked. "If I have to get up I'll take the gun till him."

"I can't take ye in, fiddler," sez Sammy. "The wife's not well, and won't hear av it. Ye'll have to push on. Good night," sez he, offerin' to shut down the windy.

"Oh, Misther Doran, ye'll niver turn me away—ye'll niver lave me wife an' childher to lie out this dhreadful night, ye'll——"

"Shut the windy, Sammy, an' don't listen till him," shouts the wife. "Dhreadful night, indeed! There hasn't been a ddrop av rain this three weeks. Tell him he's dhrunk. I can hear it in his voice. Shut the windy at once!"

"I can't let ye in, fiddler, I tell ye I can't," sez Sammy in desperation. "Iverybody's away to bed, an' the house is locked up. Ye've been dhrinkin' too. I couldn't hear av it."

"Oh, listen till him," sez the fiddler, terrible reproachful. "Ye don't mane it, Misther Doran, I know ye don't. Me dhrunk! I vow to ye dhrink hasn't crossed me lips this day, barrin' a half-a-pint I shared wi' the wife, an' three bottles av stout I had wi' Micky Ferris at the cross-roads, just to keep the life in me. I'm surprised at ye, Misther Doran, you av all men to make a mane excuse like that. An' the house isn't shut up aither. Sure I see a light in the top room."

"There's not a light in the house," sez Sammy. "I tell ye we're all in bed hours ago."

"An' I tell ye ye're a liar," sez the fiddler, gettin' angry. "Don't I see it blazin' there."

"Where," sez Sammy, stickin' his head out

av the windy in a flutter. "Holy Biddy, is the house afire! Bad scran to ye for a dhrunken ould reprobate," sez he, in a rage, "it's the moon risin' over the roof. Away out av this!" for he was purty mad himself now, an' the wife was gettin' clane unbearable from the inside. "Ye'll not get in here." An' down he slaps the windy, an' back intil bed.

"I hope the crather gets safe there, all the same," sez he, as he creeps undher the clothes.

"I hope he breaks his neck, him an' the whole av thim," sez the wife very vicious. "If it wasn't for fools like you an' the like av you they'd have to go to the poorhouse and have done wi' thim. Dhry up now," sez she, "I want to get me night's rest."

But Sammy still kept listenin' as he lay there, an' ivery clatter he heard the fiddler come out in the yard his heart blamed him for not goin' down an' lookin' afther him. But still he had to thole, for he knowed he daren't propose to get up.

Prisintly afther a desperate row near the yard gate, he hears the fiddler below the windy again.

"Oh, Misther Doran, will ye not come down an' help me on me road itself. Put me out av the yard, if it's nothin' more. I can't find the gate at all, at all. Me hands is tore off me wi' thorns, an' I've left the fiddle stickin' in the

hedge. Oh, Misther Doran, will ye let me die at your door, will ye let me die at your door ? ”

The pitiful cryin’ av him was fair breakin’ poor Sammy’s heart ; but still he daren’t budge.

In a minit or two he hears a great sprachlin’ an’ scrapin’ on the wall.

“ He’s climbin’ up to the windy, Susan,” sez he ; “ he’s on the rain-barrel. He’ll be in,” he shouts, leppin’ up an’ reachin’ for his trousers again. “ Oh, blissid and marciful,” sez he, as there comes a splash an’ a yell, “ he is in ! He’ll be dhrowned at our door, an’ his death’ll be on our head.” An’ off he boulted headlong down the stairs.

“ Come back, Sammy,” shouts the wife ; “ come back here whin I tell ye ! Let him stay there. There’s not three inches av wather in the barrel ; I emptied it the day. D’ye hear me ? ” sez she, screechin’ wi’ rage, whin she heard him shakin’ at the door in desperation to get it open, an’ niver heedin’ her.

But Sammy niver lets on, an’ out intil the yard.

Since the beginnin’ av the world there niver was anythin’ heard, I’m tould, like the roars an’ oaths an’ shtuggles av the fiddler inside the barrel. Between the dhrink, an’ the fall, an’ the fright, he was near out av his senses, an’ Sammy on the outside av the barrel was little betther.

"Are ye dhrowned, fiddler," sez he, half-cryin', "are ye dhrowned—are ye killed—are ye hurt? Give me your hand, man. Up now, up, put your toe in the bunghole,—steady, you're down again,—hould on, hould on, you'll cowp it!" An' wi' that over goes the barrel, an' out comes the fiddler an' what wather he hadn't dhried up wi' his breeches, on the top av Sammy.

Away the barrel goes till it come a blatther off the kitchen door that near shook it out av the jambs; an' up gets the fiddler an' Sammy, the wan near as far through as the other.

"Wait a minit, now, fiddler," sez Sammy, all gaspin'. "Oh, man, ye're wringin' wet. Wait an' I'll arm ye intil the kitchen."

"Will ye?" sez the wife, from the windy above. "I'll see about that."

Down the stairs she goes like a lamplighter, bangs the door near on the fiddler's nose, an' up to the windy again.

"D'ye hear me, Sammy Doran?" sez she. "Put that dhrunken rascal as far as the gate, an' come back straight to your bed, or, mark me, I'll make ye the sorry man. I'll give ye just two minits to do it in."

"Listen now, Susan," sez Sammy; "listen to rayson. I've been a good man to ye, an' niver said black was the colour av your eye since I married ye; but I can't put this unfortunate

bein' to the roads wi' his wife an' family this night even for you. I'll just bring them up an' put them in the potato house, if ye'd rather not let them intil the kitchen."

"An' listen you to me, Sammy Doran," sez the wife, scringein' her teeth,—for Sammy had niver offered as much as to cross words wi' her before,—“if ye bring that parcel av scum intil this yard the night, ye'll sleep wi' them; for this door you'll not darken.”

“Hould on a minit, Misther Doran, till I come round,” sez the fiddler, “an' I'll give her her answer.”

“Wheesht, fiddler, wheesht,” sez Sammy in desperation; for he'd heard the fiddler givin' out the hour before, an' knowed his capacity. “Susan,” sez he,—his knees was knockin' as he said it, but his heart wouldn't let him do less,—“ye don't think what ye're sayin'. I know ye don't. Ye're vexed, an' I can't blame ye. But, right or wrong, I'm bound to give these crathers shelther, an' whin mornin' comes I know ye'll say I was right. Ten or fifteen minits'll do it. Lave the kitchen door on the latch for me.”

“Niver,” sez she, between her teeth. “Make your bed—and lie on it!” An' down the windy slaps.

“Come on, fiddler,” sez Sammy. “I'll pitch four or five bundles av sthraw intil the potato

house, an' wi' that and the rugs av the car over ye, ye'll dhry in no time. "That'll do now," as the fiddler was beginnin' to give his opinion av the missis, "ye've got me intil this throuble an' the laste ye can do is hould your tongue. Where's the wife an' the two girls?" sez he, as he covered him up.

"At the foot av the loanin'," sez the fiddler, settlin' down in the sthraw, as if it was none av his business. "Ye'll maybe have bother wi' the mule; but give him a prod av your knife if he rusts, an' he'll come up it like a two-year-old."

Off goes Sammy down the avenue, be this time beginnin' to wish he'd left the fiddler in the rain-barrel; for the more he thought av the row he was in for wi' the wife, the less he thought av the fiddler. As he got near the bottom av the avenue, he begin to hear a terrible lamentin' an' cryin', as loud as if it was a half-a-score av people; an' whin he turned the corner at the foot av it, he fell in wi' the whole family.

The moon was showin' well be this time, an' he could see them as plain as daylight; an' whin he looked at them he wished himself in bed more than iver.

They had got the mule's cart piled up like a load av hay wi' as great a collection av ould rubbish as iver ye seen at a bonfire; an' on the top av it was ould Mrs. McCormick sittin'

among the legs av an upside-down table, wi' the clock in her arms. Peggy, the ouldest av the two girls, was pullin' away at the mule's head ; an' at the heels av him, or as near them as she dare go, battherin' him wi' a brush shaft, was the other wan, — Silly Sally, as they called her ; though, as far as wit wint, there wasn't much to choose between her an' the sisther.

She wasn't hittin' him above wan time in four, an' ivery time she missed him she would take a chip out av a chair or a table, or maybe break a piece av delf, an' the ould woman above would let a screech an' a sthring av blissin's at her, for a half-witted, handless crather. Ivery time she did hit him, back he'd go again the hedge till the shafts was up above his ears, an' bang would go the mother again wan av the legs av the table ; the clock strikin' away like blazes all the time, Peggy blissin' the sisther an' the mule time about, an' the ould lady shoutin' murdher.

As Sammy come up he got the beginnin' av a sermon that was meant for the fiddler ; but whin they made out who it was they couldn't contain themselves at all ; an' wi' the cryin', an' the explainin', an' the callin' down blissin's on his head he begin to think he'd niver get them stopped. The poor bein's was near out av their minds wi' joy ; an', though the mule

said nothin', in troth I think he was the best plazed av the lot.

Howiver, Sammy got him stopped at the last, an' wi' a dale av persuadin' an' a desperate lot av noise an' confusion he got the mule an' cart up intil the yard.

"Now, Peggy," sez he, "loose out the mule, an' you an' Sally lead him up to the car-house. I'll hould up the shafts until ye come back, an' thin we'll get your mother off in a jiffey. It'll be safer that way, for the mule might kick her comin' down. Hurry, now, girls," sez he, well plazed ; for he thought his throubles was over.

But he niver was furdher out in his life. Before Peggy had the mule half loosed, the baste out wi' a rush. Down goes the shafts, an' away comes the ould woman off the cart, an' the half av the furniture wi' her. It was a marcy av Providence Sammy wasn't killed. As it was he was near brained wi' the kettle ; an' as for the ould mother, if she hadn't had the luck to fall on a feather tick, her neck was broke sure.

The worst av it all was, what was left av the furniture was threatenin' to come down too, an' there was nothin' for it but to take all off.

But Sammy was long-sufferin'.

"Come on, childher," sez he, as hearty as if he wasn't near out av his mind. Set your

mother down on that bunch av sthraw, an' we'll have it done in no time."

It wasn't as aisy done as he thought, though ; for he wasn't countin' on the kind av help he had.

First he got the dhresser down, an' propped it again the wall, wi' Sally houldin' it to keep her out av the road. He'd been safer ha' he given Peggy another job av the same sort. For whin he got her up in the cart to hand down the rest av the things till him, she couldn't wait till he had wan thing out av his hand till she'd have another on top av him ; an' afther two or three narrow escapes av his life wi' chairs an' dishes, he had to get up himself. But he didn't do much betther.

The first thing he lifted was a big looking-glass. "Aisy wi' that, Misther Doran, dear," shouts the ould woman. "Miss Armitage av the Hall bestowed that on me, an' I wouldn't have it broke for a ten pound note. Watch it, it's a bit loose on the swivel. There now, I tould you that !" An' as Sammy makes a sudden glam at it, wi' what the ould woman said, round spins the glass an' catches him on the chin till ivery tooth in his head rattled.

"I wish to God," sez he, "you'd either held your tongue, or let me know in time. Me jawbone is broke," sez he, hoppin' round the cart houldin' it. "Thank hivens, that's the

last av it all anyway. Wait, what's this in the bag?—Holy Biddy," sez he, throwin' it out wi' a screech, "it's livin'."

"It's only the cat," sez the ould woman, "it's only the cat. She won't hurt ye."

"She won't hurt the devil!" sez Sammy, wringin' his hand. "She's near took the finger off me. Here," sez he, throwin' the potato-house door open in a rage; "away in the whole av ye, an' let me be done wi' ye; an' in the mornin' be off wi' ye out av this. If iver I do a kindly action in this world again, damme," sez he, "it'll not be to a fiddler anyway. In wi' ye, an' lie down; the fiddler's sleepin' in the corner—if he's not dead," sez he, "for the noise might ha' wakened a night-watchman."

But whin Sammy had put the fiddler in, he had clane forgot that the big sow was lyin' in the wee house at the upper end, wi' nothin' but a partition between it an' the potato house, an' just as he opened the door ould Biddy gives a long sleepy grunt.

Out lepps the weemin wi' a yell. "What's that, Misther Doran, at all?" sez the mother. "It's nothin' earthly," sez Peggy. "It's the devil," sez Sally, wi' a squeal, layin' hould av Sammy be the arm.

"Blethers," sez Sammy; "it's nothin'. It's the servant-boy," sez he, "he sleeps up there. He must ha' been dhramin'."

" 'Twas a powerful bad dhrame he had," sez the ould woman. " He must ha' been lyin' on his back. But come on, childher, if that's all. Good-night, Misther Doran, good-night, an' a blessin' on ye." An' in they wint.

The thribulations he'd come through wi' the fiddler's weemin folk had clane dhrove his own bother out av Sammy's head ; but whin he seen them safe in an' the door shut it all come back on him. For a long time he stood considherin' in the yard whether he'd thry an' get intil the house or not. Afther all the years he'd knuckled undher the thought av standin' up for himself at all would hardly stay on his mind ; but the hardheartedness av the wife to the unfortunate crathers at her door stuck in his gizzard more than anythin' she'd iver done till himself ; an' as well as that he was badly cut at bein' affronted before the fiddler. For, though all av us has our bits av throubles at home betimes, we aye like to keep them from the neighbours ; an' Sammy knowed right well he might as good publish the whole proceedin's in the paper as let the fiddler know.

The more he thought av the whole business, an' the fiddler goin' about the counthry makin' a good joke av it, an' puttin' a bit till it here an' there, the vexeder he got.

He knowed right well too the wife, for all she had said, would expect him back, if it was

only for the pleasure she'd have in givin' him a dhressin' down, an' that made up his mind. It was a kind av sideways way av gettin' at her, an' didn't daunt him as much as the thought av facin' her sthraight.

"I'll give her a gunk for wanst," sez he, feelin' desperate brave about it, though he knowed all the time he'd be very frightened in the mornin'. "Devil a foot I'll go near her." An' away he goes wi' a bundle av sthraw to the hen-house, an' settles himself as well as he could for the rest av the night.

If he'd thought for a week he couldn't ha' hit on a betther way to vex the wife.

Afther he'd gone out she sat up in the bed thinkin' over it all, an' gettin' madder an' madder the more ways she looked at it. At the first she could hardly believe he'd gone, an' was waitin' ivery minit till he'd come rattlin' at the door again. But whin she seen he was gone right enough she could hardly contain herself; an' afther thryin' to lie down again an' findin' it no good, she up out av bed an' put on two or three things to be ready for him whin he did come.

Prisintly she heard a noise av them comin' intil the yard, an' the clattherin' av the furniture, an' the screechin' av the weemin' an' all the disturbance still gettin' worse an' worse, till she

was fair on eggs to get out an' make mincemeat av the whole av them.

The pride wouldn't let her, though ; but the houldin' back was very severe on her temper, an' nothin' kept her up but the thought av how she'd lay intil Sammy whin she got hould av him.

Thin the noise died away, an' iverythin' settled down quiet again.

"Now," sez she till herself, "*now* I'll show him who is masther in this house."

Takin' it all round there's no doubt it was a blissin' for Sammy he stayed wi' the hens.

It took her a long time to get it intil her head that he wasn't comin' back at all ; but whin she did she clane lost herself altogether. For, though she had forbid Sammy to come back, she was madder at him for takin' her at her word than for goin' at the first ; an' though she niver had thought enough av him to be jealous av him before, I'm inclined to think the idea of him takin' up his quarthers in the potato house was even worse on her.

Down the stairs she dashes, throws herself intil an ould overcoat of Sammy's, reaches the whip off the kitchen chimney-board, an' out intil the yard like a mad-woman.

I niver could make out whether she meant to use it on Sammy or not, for she'd niver

lifted her hand till him, so far ; but, as things turned out, she didn't get the chance.

The first race she made was up the yard to the sleepin' house where wan av the ould men used to lie before he got sacked, hopin' that, afther all, Sammy might be there. Goin' up the yard she thripped over a delf hand-basin, an' in the tanthrum she was in, she up wi' the whip an' knocked it intil smithereens without pausin' on her foot.

The clatter av it roused Silly Sally inside, an' nothin' would stay in her head but it was somebody runnin' away wi' the furniture.

Out she comes, walks around it wanst or twice, an' seein' nobody there, heads for the potato house again. But as luck would have it, the door had fell till afther her, and makin' back, what does she do but open the wrong door and go intil the house above.

Between the want av wit an' the heavy-headedness—for she wasn't more than half awake—she niver knows to the differ but shuts the door an' begins gropin' round for her bed ; an' just as she thought she should be beside Peggy she falls over ould Biddy's back an' lights on the top av her.

But och ! all the noise there had been that night was nothin' to what riz thin. Up gets the ould sow wi' a sprachle av her cloots that rips half the clothes off Sally's back, an' begins

tearin' round the house squealin' desperation ; an' up gets Sally, an' to her heels to get away, squealin' twice as bad.

Round an' round the house the two av them wint, Sally makin' for the door, an' the pig not a bit particular whether she went out through that or the wall ; now Sally fallin' over the pig, an' now the pig thrappin' over Sally, an' the both av them yellin' worse ivery minit. For Sally niver thought anythin' but 'twas the divil himself had come for her, an' ould Biddy made sure she was as good as bacon.

Up bounces the fiddler an' the wife an' the other daughter an' falls to the shoutin' too ; an' down comes Mrs. Sammy down the yard wi' vengeance on the whole av them, an' only too glad av the chance av a row.

For her sins she goes to the door av the pig house, throws it open, an' the next minit out comes ould Biddy wi' a rush, runs between her legs, an' lights her on the small av her back. Mad as she was before, I hardly think she'd ha' done what she did if it hadn't been for that ; but anyway she niver sez a word, but as Sally comes out afther the pig she falls to lashin' her wi' the whip till the screeches av the poor half-witted crather would ha' softened the heart av a stone. In the middle av it the potato house door opens, an' the fiddler an' the two weemin

out pell-mell ; an' at the same minit Sammy runs up from the hen-house.

"Susan!" he shouts, "Susan! for the love av hiven stop. Stop I tell ye. Have ye no dacency left?" an' he makes to catch her arm. But there was no need av him.

The fiddler's ould wife just makes wan lepp at Mrs. Sammy. The first glam she made she tore the whip out av her hand, an' the nixt she scored her face from the forehead to the chin.

"Ye devil ye," she sez, fair pantin' wi' fury, "oh, ye devil ye! Would ye lift your hand to me daughter, would ye use a whip on a poor innocent that the affliction av God is on? But I'll tache ye. I'll tache ye!" an' ivery lepp she made at her she brought away the full av her hand av hair.

To see the size av the two weemin ye'd ha' said Mrs. Sammy could ha' ate her at a bite, besides the fiddler's wife bein' near twice the age; but I believe if the fiddler hadn't got hould av the ould woman's tails she'd ha' killed the other wan, for they say the spangs av her was something' wondherful to see.

An' she might ha' killed her for Sammy; for the sight av the wife bein' clane cowed an' beaten be an ould woman av over sixty clane dumbfoundhered him, an' he could do nothin' but just stand an' gape at her.

Clane cowed she was, too, for a minit or two anyway, an' stood there roarin' an' cryin' at a terrible rate, wi' the blood runnin' down her face, an' her hair all over her shouldhers. But though the ould woman had been too many for her, she thought she was still more than a match for Sammy, an' all at wanst she turns on him like a cat.

"Will ye stand there, ye poor miserable crather," sez she pushin' the hair back off her face, "an' see your wife bate an' abused be that ould tinker? If you're a man at all, ye'll lash her off the place, an' the rest av thim afther her. Do ye hear me?" sez she, stampin' on the ground before him, an' screamin' wi' rage.

But wee Sammy's blood was up at last. Partly it was maybe that he'd seen that the wife was a bit av a coward wi' all her bullyin'; but more than anythin' it was the scunner he had got at seein' the unmerciful beatin' she gave the poor idiot.

"Susan," sez he, "I'm sorry for what has happened to ye; but all I have to say is, the devil's cure to ye; for ye desarved it, if iver a woman did."

"What!" sez she. "I desarved it, did I? I'll give you what you desarve, though, ye pitiful wee crab." An' wi' that she up wi' her hand an' hits him a slap in the face that knocked him up again the mule's cart.

I don't know whether he'd ha' let her off wi' it or not ; but the fiddler settled it. Over he lurches to Sammy, straightens him up, an' peers down at him wi' his wicked ould face.

"Sammy," sez he, "I'm a man that has managed three weemin this twinty odd years, an' me advice is worth listenin' to. Give her somethin' wi' that she'll remember," sez he, pickin' up the whip, "for now's the time to settle to the end av your days whether you'll be a man or a mouse."

I think it come on Sammy all at once that the fiddler was right, an' 'twas now or niver. But he up wi' the whip anyway an' dhrew it round the wife's petticoats as she stood there darin' him.

"Intil the house wi' ye," he roars, near as wicked as herself. "I've stood ye too long, but ye've overstepped yourself this time. In wi' ye, double quick !" an' he makes at her again.

She made a kind av a half-hearted run at him, an' thried to catch the whip out av his hand. There's no tellin' what would ha' been the outcome av it if she'd gone on. But all at wanst she stopped, threw her apron over her head, an' run for the house, roarin' and cryin' as if her heart was broke.

It was too much for poor soft-hearted Sammy, mad an' all as he was. He down wi' the whip

an' afther her. But the fiddler had him be the coat-tails before he was well started.

"Ye blasted wee fool ye," sez he, "would ye put your head in the rope again! Ye desarve to be let do it too; but ye've been good to me an' mine the night, an' before the night, an' I'll not let ye. Stay here an' give us a hand wi' our bits av sticks—we'll be gone before ye're awake—an' thin go in an' up the stairs like a roarin' devil. Throw the furniture about a bit, an' if ye break an ornament or two it'll do no harm. Thin intil bed wi' ye, an' if the wife as much as says 'cheep,' kick her across the floor; an' from this to your dyin' day ye'll be masther in your own house, what ye'd ha' been from the beginnin' if I'd had the thrainin' av ye."

Nobody iver knowed what passed between Sammy an' the wife afther he wint in. I misdoubt he didn't carry out all the fiddler's advice; for there was mighty little av the roarin' devil about Sammy, even at his angriest. But I know whin he walked behind her coffin to Ballybreen churchyard, ten years aftherwards, he cried a deal heartier for her than he'd ha' done if she'd broke her neck whin she fell over ould Biddy the night av the fiddler's flittin'.

CHAPTER XI

“THE MANX CAT”

Whiniver a woman takes to keepin' cats it's as good as all up wi' her, as far as gettin' a man is concerned. Dogs isn't half as bad. There's somethin' manly an' plucky about a dog, an' whin ye see even an' ould maid wi' a lump av a dog at her heels, it's a sign there's some spunk in her yet.

But cats is the very devil; cowld-rife, shiverin' crathers, that's always shovin' their hindher-end up again the grate, an' wouldn't face across the sthreet if the sun wasn't shinin'.

Whin a woman takes to thim she begins clockin' over the fire, an' in no time at all she's as dhry an' withered-lookin' as a row av peas in the month av Septimber.

That's the way ould Miss Armstrong wint.

I niver could tell how it was she didn't get a man, for she had plinty av money an' a fine place av it up at the Hall, but wan way or another she missed her market. Thim that she would take wouldn't have her, an' thim that would ha' taken her she wouldn't look at.

So be the time she was turned av forty she clane lost heart an' took to cats.

An' Lord ! but she had the menagerie av thim, big an' wee, an' all manner o' breeds. I'd niver ha' thought there was as many kinds av cats in the world, if I hadn't seen them wi' me own eyes.

An' for all that she was aye gettin' more. Ivery now an' thin you'd see ould Sammy Bones comin' out av Ballygullion wi' a basket on his arm ; an' ye might ha' guessed what was in it a quarther av a mile away,—if ye had no power av your nose, that is ; for troth, some av thim fancy cats looks better nor they smell.

It niver bothered ould Billy, though. He was blin' av wan eye, an' by carryin' the basket on the side wi' the good eye, he could keep his head bravely turned away an' still look in front av him.

Many a time I wondhered how he iver got safe home wi' the half av the cats, all the same.

The head was niver the sstrongest part av Sammy, an' whin ye give him a message ye were niver sure what he'd bring ye back.

He used to run errands for the whole counthry ; but, wi' his makin' one mistake an' another, people began to stop employin' him, an' he was in a bad way till Miss Armstrong took him an' kept him about the place for runnin' odd jobs.

It happened that the ould lady wint to the Isle av Man for a thrip wan summer, an' whin she was there she heard word av a breed av Manx cats that was beyont iverything.

So she trysted a kitten for herself, an' it was to be sent her whin it was full grown. She was greatly on wi' the new cat, an' talked about it all over the place till iverybody was as keen to see it as if it had been a goold wan.

An' goold it might ha' been, too ; for it seems she paid fifteen pounds for it, a lamentable price for a cat.

At last the time come for it to be sent, an' wan mornin' in Septimber Sammy was sint off wi' the wee basket, as usual, to fetch it home.

Wi' all the crack he'd heard about it, he was mighty curious to see the cat ; but as bad luck would have it, whin he got to the station, instead av puttin' the baste in his basket they just handed him the wee hamper it come in. So all the way home he was fair burstin' wi' curiosity.

An' the devil, bein' busy as usual, must send big Billy av the Hills, the biggest joker in Ballygullion, along the same road.

About a mile out av Ballygullion, Billy took up wi' him.

" What kind av a baste have you the day, Sammy ? " sez he.

" Oh, begobs," sez Sammy," I've the quare

baste this journey. This is none av your common pussies. Fifteen pound she cost —fifteen pound, mind ye. She's a Manx. What's a Manx cat like, Mr. Lenahan?" sez he.

"Do ye not know that?" sez Billy. "Sure she has only three legs. Devil a baste in the Isle av Man has more."

"Three legs?" sez Sammy, wi' the eyes near bulgin' out av his head. "Begobs, 'tis wonderful. But how in the name av Hiven does she stand? Sure she's bound to cowp over."

"She's all right so long as she keeps movin'," sez Billy; "an' whin she stops she just props herself up wi' her tail."

"She must have the wondherful fine tail, thin," sez Sammy.

"Ye may swear it," sez Billy. "They tell me the tail av thim is four times as long as an ordinary cat's. It's a wondher in itself," sez he.

"Begobs," sez Sammy, "I'll have a look at it. Lend me your knife, Mr. Lenahan, till I open a wee bit av a hole in the lid. Be the livin' fortune, the tail's clane off her!" sez he, peerin' in.

"It's jokin' ye are," sez Billy.

"Devil a bit," sez Sammy. "Look for yourself."

"In troth you're right, Sammy," sez Billy, lookin' in. "Was she all right whin she left the station?"

"I niver seen her," sez Sammy. "They wouldn't take her out av the hamper."

"There ye are!" sez Billy. "They've taken it off in the railway an' want to blame it on you."

"Begobs," sez Sammy, "ye've hit it. Some of them porther divils has nipped it off in a door. The way they slap them till is sayrious. I mind well bringin' a fox-terrier to Major Donaldson. The porther in Belfast nipped his tail in the carriage-door, an' the poor baste pinned me be the leg, thinkin' 'twas I had such a grip av the other end av him. Sure the mark av his teeth is in my shin yit. But what's to be done now? The Misthress'll be the end av me."

"Ye'd betther look if the tail's in the hamper," sez Billy.

"So I had," sez Sammy. "Wait till I cut the cords."

Now the cat may ha' been the sweetest tempered crather that iver supped milk whin she started; but between the hunger an' the joultin' an' jabblin' she got on the boat an' thrain, she was in no very kindly frame av mind be this time, and whin Sammy lifted the lid she puts out a paw an' tickles his cheek a

bit,—purty well intil the bone I would say,—an' Sammy lets a screech out av him an' dhrops hamper an' all.

"Catch her, ye fool!" sez Billy, reachin' for the hamper; for he had no mind to be the means av losin' a fifteen pound cat. But just as he stooped, out comes the Manx, cursin' and spittin', an' wi' wan spang she lights on Billy's face, an' before he got her off he could ha' matched Sammy's scratch wi' a score. The language av Billy bate the cat clane work till he got her off, an' whin he did, he gives her a heave lit her twenty yards over the ditch intil Maginness's quarry.

The fall would ha' killed an ordinary baste; but there's nothin' ordinary about a cat, an' if she lost wan life in the quarry, she took the other eight up the far side av it, an' away across countrhy as if the devil was afther her.

An throth I believe he was, an' stuck till her all day; for nothin' less dhriv her across me an' wee Mr. Anthony, the solicitor, that was out shootin' in the afthernoon.

'Twas unfortunate for the cat anyway, for as she skulked down the ditch in front av him, Mr. Anthony, who's terrible short-sighted, up wi' the gun an' laid her stiff. An' the devil was in that too; for 'twas the first time I iver knowed him to hit anythin' that wasn't standin' still.

"Hi! Pat," sez he, in great delight wi' himself. "I've got a rabbit. No," sez he, gettin' nearer, "'tis a hare. H—l to me sowl," sez he, bendin' over her, "it's a cat!"

"It's no cat," sez I, comin' up, "where's her tail?"

"Tail or no tail," sez he, "it's a cat. It's wan av thim Manx cats."

"Well, well," sez I; "there's little harm done. It might ha' been a calf or somethin' valuable."

"Confound me for a blunderin' fool," sez Mr. Anthony, throwin' down the gun in a rage. "I'm always exposin' meself to ridicule wan way or another."

"For the love av Hivin, Mr. Anthony," sez I, "the nixt time ye throw down a gun like that, keep the muzzle nixt yerself. I've a wife an' childher dependin' on me. But don't worry yerself about the cat. Pitch the baste intil the sheugh, an' come on——. Hould on a minit! Here's people comin'. Sit down on her!"

Wi' that up comes ould Sammy and Miss Armstrong's gamekeeper, an' two or three hangers on about the Hall.

"Ye haven't seen a cat, Mr. Murphy," sez the gamekeeper.

I could see Mr. Anthony spreadin' out the tails av his coat as he sat.

"No," sez I, "have ye lost wan?"

"Ay, have we," sez he, "an' the right name av her is a cat. 'Twas a Manx cat that this ould fool here let out av the hamper, as he was bringin' her home, an' we're scourin' the counthry for her. An' well we may. She cost the mistress fifteen pound, an' she's puttin' out a reward av five for anybody brings news av the baste."

"Well, good-luck to ye, boys," sez I ; "I hope ye'll get her. Mr. Anthony an' I'll keep an eye out for her. We're just takin' a rest for a minit."

"Come on now, sir," sez I, whin they'd gone, "intil the ditch wi' her, an' away we'll go wi' nobody a bit the wiser."

"I hope to goodness it'll not come out," sez Mr. Anthony, very nervous like. "I'll be laughed out av the place if it does. I've had so many wee accidents like this, ye see. Not to mention that 'twould cost me fifteen pound."

"We're well clear av her now," sez I. "We're a quarther av a mile away from her be this time."

"D'ye think they mightn't find her," sez he. "They seen us sittin' there."

"Not thim," sez I. "They'll niver go over the same ground twice. She'll be there till the rats eat her. Where's the dog, though ? He wouldn't touch her, I suppose ?"

"No," sez Mr. Anthony ; "he's too well

thrained. I'll answer for that, for I brought him up meself, from a puppy. Here, 'Rover! Rover!' " sez he. He whistles a bit, an' in a minit up comes the dog waggin' his tail, and lays the cat at his feet.

"I doubt his eddication isn't finished," sez I.

"Confound the dog," sez he, "I don't know what's come over him. Wait, though, I know what it was. I didn't forbid him. Here, Rover," sez he, "see that!" holdin' up the cat, "don't touch it!"

The dog looks up in his face very wise, an' wags his tail a bit.

"D'ye mind him, Pat?" sez Mr. Anthony, pattin' him on the head. "Sure he knows the very words I'm sayin'. Now, over the ditch wi' the cat, quick, before somebody sees her."

"Ye'd betther let me bury her," sez I, "an' then she's done wi'."

"No," sez he—he was a terrible obstinate man when he had his mind made up—"I want to let you see how the dog's thrained."

So over the ditch went the cat, an' on we goes.

Before we were at the nixt turn av the road, up comes the dog again wi' her in his mouth, waggin' his whole hind end he was that sure he'd done a good thing.

"D—n the baste," sez wee Mr. Anthony, in a rage, "I wish to Hivin I'd shot him instead

av the cat. We'll niver get rid av the confounded carcase at this rate."

"Take away the dog," sez I, "an' I'll hide it. We'll be found wi' it before all's over."

"Hould on," sez he, "an' I'll fire a shot. The dog'll be off to look for what I've hit."

"He'll not go," sez I, "when he sees nothin' fall."

"Av coorse he will," sez he, very cross. "D'ye think I hit something ivery time I fire?"

"For any sake thin," sez I, "shoot, an' have your own way av it."

Bang goes the gun, off goes the dog to see what Mr. Anthony had missed, an' away goes the cat over the ditch again.

"We're rid av her this time," sez I. "There's the dog in front av us."

The words wasn't out av me mouth till I hears a wee pipin' shout behind us :—"Mr. Anthony, Mr. Anthony." Whin we looked around here was Brian Burke's wee son tearin' afther us wi' the cat in his hand.

"Here it is, sir," sez he, comin' up all out of breath ; "here's the baste ye shot. It fell just at me feet as the gun went off. An' man, it give a quare lepp for the last, clane over the hedge from the county road."

"What is it, Mr. Anthony?" sez he. "Is it a rabbit?"

"Av coorse it is," sez I. "Give it to me."

"It's a quare lookin' rabbit," sez he, starin' at the feet stickin' out av me pocket. "I niver knowed a rabbit had claws before."

"We're done," sez Mr. Anthony to me in a whisper. "Whiniver he hears av Miss Armstrong's cat bein' lost, he'll put two an' two together an' it'll all be out. Will I give him half-a-sovereign, an' tell him to hould his tongue?"

"If ye give him half-a-sovereign," sez I, "he'll talk about it till he's a grown man. Give him a sixpence for findin' it, an' thrust to luck."

The wee fellow went away well plazed wi' the sixpence, an' on we thramps wi' the cat wanst more.

"We'll niver get rid av the infernal animal," sez Mr. Anthony, rubbin' the sweat off his face. "Damme," sez he, "it's like a nightmare. There's no good hidin' her now she's been seen. I'd betther go on to Miss Armstrong's an' own up till it at wanst. The child's sure to let it out if he meets the gamekeeper."

"Wait a minit," sez I, "I have it ! We'll skin her, an' hide the skin, an' do you take the carcase home wi' ye. Hould on now !" as he was goin' to break in wi' something, "suppose they do find it on us ; that's just what we want. 'I hear ye killed a quare rabbit,' sez the gamekeeper. 'Nothin' quare about it,' sez

you, ‘here it is ;’ and who’s goin’ to tell it isn’t a rabbit wi’ the skin off. Let them make their best or worst av it. An’ if they want to see the skin, there’s as many rabbit skins at my place as would thatch a house.”

“It sounds all right,” sez he, a bit doubtful-like. “Anyway we can’t do betther. Skin her an’ have done wi’ it.”

So I skinned her in a jiffey.

“Now,” sez I, “I’ll bury the skin, an’ thin there’s no evidence again us.”

“It’s a horrid pity to lose the rest av the evenin’s shootin’,” sez Mr. Anthony. “An’ me eye must be well in too. Ye seen the way I bowled the cat over. It’s not often I’m shootin’ so well.”

“I’ll tell ye thin what we’ll do,” sez I; “we’ll lave the carcase at Big Billy’s cottage round the corner, an’ call for it comin’ back. If we meet the gamekeeper it’s there to show.”

Just at the door av the cottage we meets Billy’s ould mother comin’ out.

“Good afthernoon, Mrs. Lenahan,” sez I, “would ye mind keepin’ this rabbit for Mr. Anthony till he comes back? I’ve skinned it for him, ready to bring home.”

“Hing it up in the wee panthry there,” sez she, “an’ welcome. I’m goin’ over to me sistar’s, but if I’m not here whin ye come back, me daughter Margit’ll be home. She’s away

wi' Billy to Ballygullion. Have ye heard about the cat?"

"What cat?" sez Mr. Anthony, givin' a jump.

"The Manx cat for Miss Armstrong," sez she. "Ould Sammy let her escape out av the hamper, an' whin Billy thried to catch her she near tore the face off him. He come home here in a lamentable state, an' I just packed him off to Ballygullion to get the wounds dhressed. I wish the divil had that ould woman an' her cats."

"Amen!" sez Mr. Anthony. I hope he answers his responses as hearty in church.

Off we goes to the shootin'; but we might as well ha' stayed at home. Maybe the cat was weighin' on his mind, or maybe he'd had his share av straight shootin' for wan day whin he hit her—for he niver had what you'd call a big average av hits; but he could do no good at all wi' the gun.

His heart was a bit warmed wi' puttin' a couple av pickles or so in the dog's hind leg whin he was aimin' at a watherhen, for though he wouldn't ha' shot the baste deliberate, he had a grudge at him over the cat; but for all that he started back for Billy's cottage in poor heart.

"This had been a horrid unlucky day," sez he; "I wish we were well clear av this cat business."

"Well, here's your chance," sez I. "Here's the gamekeeper an' the rest av thim. Now for it ; an' lave as much as ye can to me. I'm rale good at makin' up a story. An' faith I'll need to be this time, for here's wee sonny Burke wi' them.

Up comes the ould gamekeeper lookin' very tired and cross.

"I take it very ill for a gintleman like you, Mr. Anthony, to keep us scourin' the counthry all day," sez he, "whin ye might ha' tould us at wanst ye had shot the cat."

"Shot what cat, ye ould fool ye?" sez I. "What are ye bletherin' about?"

"Ye needn't be thryin' on any av you're bluff wi' me, Pat Murphy," sez he. "The cat's in your pocket. Wee sonny Burke here seen the claws."

"Claws," sez I. "Is it claws on a rabbit? The sorrow a thing we've shot this day barrin' wan solithary rabbit; an' 'twas a charity to shoot it before it died av ould age. The divil a such a job I iver had to get the skin off an animal before. If ye'd like to see it the body's hingin' up in Billy Lenahan's. I sent the skin home wi' wan av my wee boys. But an knowledgeable man like you'll be able to tell a cat from a rabbit, skin or no skin," sez I.

For the life av me I couldn't keep a bit av a smile off my face, an' wan or two av the men

wi' the gamekeeper broke intil a laugh. But he didn't laugh at all.

"Ye 'tarnal ould fox ye," sez he, "there's no end to your thricks. But you're bate this time. The boy here'll swear to the claws."

"Will he?" sez Mr. Anthony. "Come here, sonny," sez he, gettin' between the wee boy an' the rest. I could see him showin' the edge av a crown piece out av his pocket. "Are ye *sure* ye seen claws, sonny?"

"No," sez the wee chap, very quick—the Burkes is niver slow when there's money to be made—"I niver said I seen claws. I said I *thought* I seen them."

"An' thinkin's no good, or harm either," sez Mr. Anthony. "I doubt, gamekeeper, this ridiculous idea av yours won't hould wather. As Pat here says, we can show ye the carcase."

"Ay, an' the skin, too," sez I. "That's if he can pick it out av four or five dozen lyin' in the loft at home. Maybe more than that too ; for the boys was out ferritin' whin I left home wi' you, Mr. Anthony, an' there'll be a lot av fresh skins there be this time."

The ould gamekeeper girned, an' growled, an' muttered a minit or two, an' thin turned away without a word ; for he was bate, an' he knewed it.

All av a sudden he turned on his fut. "I have ye yet," sez he. "John"—to wan av the

men—"run across to Mr. Connor's—I seen the vet. there as we passed, an' ask him to step over to Billy Lenahan's."

"We'll just look at your carcase, gentlemen," sez he, "and if the vet. doesn't know it from a rabbit there's mighty little use av all the letthers he puts afther his name. Come on, now," sez he, chucklin' like a layin' hen, "smart as ye are!"

"We're done," sez Mr. Anthony to me as we walked nixt Billy's. "I'm down fifteen pound—fifteen pound five, for I'll have to give that wee Judas a crown. An' I'll be laughed at worse than if I'd owned up at first. Pat," sez he, very savage, "if ye hear av anybody wantin' a breech-loadin' gun, send him up to me—an' I'll throw him in a dog, for luck."

"Tut, tut," sez I, "we're not bate yet if I can only get a word with the vet. Him an' me's ould friends."

But the gamekeeper was too many for me. The vet. was sittin' in his thrapp at Billy's door when we got there, an' he boned him at wanst.

"Misther Fortescue," sez he, "Mr. Anthony an' me has a bet on, a big bet, too, for fifteen pounds, no less. It's whether ye can tell a rabbit from a cat when the skin is off. Just come intil Billy's here an' we'll show ye the animal. Ye'll give me fair play, won't ye!"

"It's the quarest bet I've heard av for a while," sez the vet. But I'll soon settle it. An' why wouldn't I give ye fair play?" An' before I could get a word wi' him, he was inside.

"Brazen it out, Mr. Anthony," whispers I. "It's only his word agin ours. The child's word is no value at all. Sure everybody knows wan av the Burke's niver tould the truth yit, barrin' be a mistake."

"I'm afeared it's no good," sez he; "but I'll do my best."

"Would ye let us see that rabbit we left in, Mrs. Lenahan?" sez he. "There's a bet on about it, an' these gintlemen is here to see fair fair play."

"Come in men," sez he, holdin' open the door; "an' do you get out to blazes," sez he, hittin' the dog a welt wi' the toe av his boot that sent him yellin' down the road.

"I'll get it for ye, sir," sez Mrs. Lenahan, goin' intil the wee pantry.

We heard her scrufflin' about a bit, an' thin she comes out empty-handed.

"It's not there," sez she, all flustered; "somebody's stole it. I niver touched it, Mr. Anthony, I give ye me word an' honor, sir."

"Bets is off," sez the vet. "No starters."

The ould gamekeeper's lip dhropped six inches,

"Was it iver there, Mrs. Lenahan," sez he, very nasty, "or is the whole thing a made up story?"

"Who's makin' up a story?" sez she. "Didn't I see Pat Murphy hing it up wi' his own hands. Wait, here's Margit."

"Margit," sez she, "did ye see a rabbit in the panthry?"

"Ay," sez Margit; "what about it? I cooked it for Billy whin he come home from Ballygullion."

"An' did he ate it?" sez the gamekeeper, wi' a screech.

"Ate it; aye did he, the greedy gorb," sez she. "I went down to the fields to loose the goat, an' when I come back he devoured it all, lock, stock, an' barrel, an' niver left me even a bone worth pickin'."

"Don't look at me, Mr. Anthony dear," sez I in a whisper, "or I'll burst. Och, poor Billy the crather!—an' here he is."

Down comes Billy from the room that minit. Iverybody held his breath, barrin' the wimmen an' the vet.

"What's wrong wi' your face, Billy?" sez the vet. "What are ye all plastered up for?"

"Its that ould fool Miss Armstrong's Manx cat that done it," sez Billy. "I wish I had me hands on it." An' he let fly a sistring av oaths.

"Lave the baste alone, Billy," sez the game-

keeper ; "lave her alone. You've had your revenge—an' more. You've ate her," sez he.

"I've what ?" sez Billy.

"You've ate her," sez the gamekeeper. "That was the rabbit ye ate. Mr. Anthony here shot her ; Pat Murphy skinned her to keep anybody from knowin' ; an' you've ate her. An' divil choke ye on her too, for you've lost me five pound."

But Billy niver heard the last part.

"For the love av Hiven, Mr. Anthony," sez he, wi' the cowld sweat breakin' on him, an' his face near green, "tell me he's a liar ! "

"Av coarse, he is, Billy," sez I ; "'twas a rabbit. I seen Mr. Anthony shoot it, meself."

"Is it truth you're tellin', Pat ?" sez he, all thrimblin.' "Don't deceave me. I'ts not too late yet, for if it was a cat, her an' me'll maybe part company yet. No! No!" sez he, catchin' sight av Mr. Anthony's face, "Mr. Anthony dear, don't say it was a cat ! "

"'Twas a rabbit, right——" But the words died on me lips.

Out from between the vet.'s feet an' the gamekeeper's pushes Mr. Anthony's dog, all covered wi' earth, an' lays the cat's skin an' head at his masther's feet, right in the middle av us.

"Hould on, Billy," sez I ; "wait a minit——"

But Billy made wan rush for the door——.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

"The nixt thing'll be for it all to come out in a book, thin, Misther Doyle," said Mr. Murphy, as I laid down the last of the proofs.

"That's the nixt thing, Pat," I answered.

"Well, I'll be glad to see it," said Mr. Murphy ; "if it was only to hear what people'll have to say. Some of thim'll be makin' out it's all lies, ye may swear."

"I doubt you're getting nervous, Pat," said I.

"'Deed, maybe I am, Misther Doyle," answered Mr. Murphy. "I have more rayson, too, than ye'd think. I ha' come before the public wanst already in me time."

"Have you, indeed, Pat," said I. "You never told me that before."

"I don't know that I did, Misther Doyle," said Mr. Murphy. "But I'll tell ye about it now if ye like, an' thin ye'll see what's in me mind :

"Whin I was a lump av a fellow about twelve years av age, me father's ould horse took more dhrink wan day than was good for him like many a wiser bein' than himself; an' got the colic from it, an' died.

"Not to take the baste's character away, it was nothin' but wather he had; but ye see even that can do ye harm, if ye take too much av it.

"The wee Masther used to say—whin I'd be tellin' the story—'twas a lesson to human bein's; an' himself took it to heart—as far as the wather wint.

"However, me father was badly sould over the business; for he had two acres av potatoes to come out, an' no way av getting another horse; an' afther a dale av deliberatin' between him an' me mother, they made up their minds they'd sell the potatoes in the dhrill.

"'I'll step intil Ballygullion,' sez me father, 'an' get two or three handbills printed.'

"'Ould Lyness'll laugh at ye,' sez me mother, 'askin' him to do a footherin' job like that.'

"'Divil a fear av the same ould boy,' sez me father. 'I niver seen him turn away money yet. He'd hang himself if he thought he'd make anythin' out av the burial cards.'

"'Why couldn't the child here write out the notices,' sez me mother. 'He's a brave scholar'

now ; an' isn't a shillin' or two as good in your pocket as in ould Lyness's ?'

" 'Ivery bit,' sez me father, 'an' betther. I niver thought av the child. Come on, sonny, an' an'let us see what ye can show for your schoolin'.'

" I need hardly tell ye I was well plazed at the chance av showin' me cliverness ; an' whin I got the notices all copied out in the best hand I could muster, there wasn't a prouder wee fellow in Ireland. It near made me sorry I was lavin' school at Christmas.

" I mind how they wint, to this day, down to the very spellin'—I got that well knocked intil me later on—

" 'For Sale at Jhon Murphy's near Ballygullion, a field of potatoes in the drill. Purchachers apply at the house.'

" Whin I had thim done—it took me from dinner time till near dark, I may tell ye—me father wint out an' pasted thim all round the neighbourhood ; an' the nixt mornin' I was up at the skreek av day an' out to school an hour early, to go an' look at thim.

" Ivery wan I come till I'd stop an' read it over, an' stan' back an' look at it, an' thin go forrad an' read it again, an' clean out the thumb-marks me father had made on it wi' the paste ; an' the more I'd look at each wan the more I'd admire it, an' think what a dale cliverer I was than anybody else.

"An' iverybody come by I'd look at the notice from the middle av the road till they'd look at it too, and read it out to them that couldn't do it for themselves ; an' still at the heels av the hunt I'd manage to bring in that it was me father's potatoes, an' 'twas me that wrote the notice.

"I was a bit gunked at the first to see that them that didn't know me was a dale too anxious to find out if the potatoes was good to care who wrote the notice about them ; but them that did know me made up for it all an' more.

"'An' ye wrote it yourself, boy,' wan would say. 'You're a fine fellow. You're the boy to help you're father.'

"'An' 'twas you wrote it, Pat, was it ?' sez another. 'Faith you're the right scholar.'

"Till between wan an' the other, Misther Doyle, before I reached Ballygullion, the road would hardly hould me wi' the pride.

"If I'd only knowed, there was a sore come down for me.

"The first knock I got was from Lyness, the printer. I met him just in the middle av Ballygullion sthreet, an' like the silly wee gomeril I was, what must I do but stop him an' tell him all about the bills, an' how 'twas me wrote them. I thought he'd think more av it than another body.

"I didn't see the fool I'd made av meself for a minit or two.

"‘So you wrote thim yourself, sonny,’ sez the ould man very polite.

“‘Yes, sir,’ sez I. I wrote thim—an’ made thim up too.’

“‘An’ saved your father havin’ to go to me,’ sez he, still very civil.

“‘Yes, sir,’ sez I. ‘I thought he might as well—’

“‘An’ thin all at wanst I seen how I’d put me foot in it, an’ stood there very red an’ foolish lookin’, wishin’ for the first time in me life I was in school.

“‘Ay, ye little wasp ye,’ sez ould Lyness, burstin’ out all av a sudden, an’ gettin’ as red as a turkeycock, ‘ye would write the bills, would ye, an’ save your father money—ay, an’ take the bread out av me mouth ; an’ your father would make a show av himself on ivery dead wall about Ballygullion sooner than spend a couple av shillin’s on advertisin’ his potatoes like a Christian ?

“‘Ay, ay, still the same ould story,’ sez he, comin’ out av the rage again an’ dhroppin’ intil a kind av a whine ; ‘iverybody that can hould a pen in his hand must take the livin’ av thim that has their bread to earn be it. The very childher’s at it.

“‘Run away, sonny,’ sez he ; “I don’t blame you. But maybe some day ye’ll be sorry ye took the bit out av an ould man’s mouth.”

"I was glad enough to get off as chape as that, I can tell ye. But the whole good av the thing was spoiled for me, an' I went on down the road feelin' very mane.

"I hadn't come to the worst av it yet, though.

"We weren't well settled in the school till the masther rings his wee bell for silence.

"'Pat Murphy, come up,' he says in his big school voice.

"So I walks up the middle av the room wi' ivery child in it turnin' to look at me as much as to say : 'Aha, Pat Murphy, now you're goin' to catch it,' an' me wondherin' what I had been up to that had come out. Ye could niver tell be ould Boyle whether 'twas a compliment or a lickin' he had for ye till ye got it ; but I couldn't help thinkin' he'd a desperate business-lookin' grip av the cane.

"'Tell me now, Pat,' sez he ; 'I saw a notice about some potatoes as I came along the road. Did you write it ?'

"'Yes, sir,' sez I, very relieved in me mind, an' feelin' the pride risin' in me again. For, thinks I, this is a good mark for me.

"'Ah, indeed,' sez ould Boyle. 'I suppose you're proud av it too ?'

"I couldn't just describe to ye the way he said it ; but somehow the pride wint down through me boots all in a minit.

"‘Yes,’ sez he, lanin’ forrad an’ bonin’ me be the ear; ‘I suppose you’re proud av it, Pat? I suppose you’re proud av disgracin’ the Ballygullion school an’ the masther av it, all over the countrry?’

“‘How do you spell “John” in the fourth class, Pat?’ sez he; ‘is it J-h-o-n or J-o-h-n?’ sez he, given’ me a cut over the legs at ivery lettther.

“‘An’ “purchasers,” Pat? There are two c’s in “purchasers,” Pat, aren’t there?’ sez he, givin’ me a couple av fearful welts for the two c’s.

“‘Go back to your desk, sir,’ sez he; ‘an’ this evenin’ afther school you’ll sit down an’ write me out that notice fifty times; an’ if iver ye put out such an illiterate production again while you’re a pupil av this school, I’ll raise welts on ye as thick at me thumb.’

“‘An’, troth, as I sat on me sate that evenin’, shiftin’ from wan leg to another for aise, I was the sorry wee fellow I hadn’t left the writin’ to them that makes a business av it.

“I hope, Misther Doyle,” said Mr. Murphy with a look between droll and serious, as he rose to go—“I hope it won’t be the same wi’ me about the book.”

